

DAPHNE
AND OTHER POEMS



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D A P H N E

AND OTHER POEMS

BY

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London

MACMILLAN AND CO.

AND NEW YORK

1891

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DELOS

DAPHNE

I

THE coming Day flush'd all the orient,
And more and more the purple dawnlight soar'd
To radiant glory, as Apollo trod,
With breeze-blown locks, the long Olympian slopes,
His harp upon his shoulders, as he came,
Dashing away from him the diamond dews
With his swift feet, that seem'd afire with haste
And joy. But lo ! the darkness on his brows
Speaks but of pain ; and, were he not a God,
Those twin pearls in his eyes were unshed tears ;
And those pale lips, that never yet had paled,
Seem touch'd as with a winter of despair.
And yet the odorous breezes rang the chords
Of his gold harp, as tho' to waken up
The heart of the high minstrel, and his tongue
To their wont use—the song, the morning song,
The pæan, which the sleep of Nature hears

Ev'n in its dreams and listens—and the birds
Under the thickets sparkle forth a note,
And then another, till the woodlands seethe,
Their green waves surging, a melodious sea,
With flooded music. From the marble steeps
The cataracts fling themselves with conscious pride,
And pour upon the winds their rolling bass,
Set to the forest's harmony, and catch
Upon their azure shields the first broad lance
Of sunrise, as the swift empyreal shafts
Shoot o'er the peaks down thro' the purple glooms,
Like thunderbolts of gold. He, the great King
Of Day, was silent, and he listen'd not
To all that music, and his eyes were blind
To all that beauty ; yet his step was swift.
And now he paused upon the bloomed edge
Of a green hill, the last before the vale
Spread out its woods and waters ; and he stood
Musing awhile ; his tall, immortal form
To the shy wood-gods, and the satyrs, rose
Dark and gigantic on the glowing light ;
But the blind eyes of men beheld him not.
And he advanced, and raised his hand, and smote
The golden harp ; and worldwide pulses ran
Round the deep sky, keen, vital, undulant ;
And, glancing from the airy peak, rolled back
The vast illumined gates of volumed cloud,
In answer to that cry, and lifted hand,
The great Sun, sceptred Monarch of the world,

Nature's sole king, look'd from his mountain throne ;
And mortal vision veil'd itself, and bow'd
Before him, and the heart of all things throb'd
Exulting adoration without fear.

The daughters of the woodnymphs, and the fawns,
From their high bowered walks, and arched aisles
Of forestry, ran down the glens and vales,
As they peep'd out a moment, and then fled
To their cool grots, or to the sloping green
Of rivulet banks, that rush'd away beneath
The curtains of wild rose, and eglantine.

And the tall oaks, and beeches swung their heads
Before the waved banners of the winds,
That blew their trumpets on before the king.

The dark lakes shiver'd with a fearful joy,

And flash'd it back into the sovran eye

In splendour worthy of him ; and far off

Surf-smitten shores, and rosy headlands, laugh'd
Hush'd rapture, and were felt, although unheard
The glad hymns of the ocean-beaten isles.

Then turn'd he toward the plain, and hark ! the mirth

Of man came up in mingled shout and song,

And the shrill cries of merry children, crost

By bleat, and bark, and low of oxen, fill'd

The plain with the blithe utterance of the bliss

That glows through all things. "Happy ye," he said,

"Who with your simple instincts taste the joy

I bring ye with the daylight ; whose prone loves

Draw from the breast of Nature their sole boon,

And seek no higher. If the simple herd
That drives ye to the pool—the shepherd boy
That gathers the wild flock—the fowler skill'd
To snare his birds—could make ye feel the pulse
Of their own life, so far beyond your state
Would ye be happier with the sense of new
Ineffable affections—thrills of hope—
Pangs of regret—imaginings, fears—
Than now ye are amid the pearled flowers ?
And would a mortal—if a God should fill
Her heart with sudden impulses, enough
To shake the slender harpstrings of her frame,
To run along her nerves in rills of fire,
To speed the pulses of her kindling blood
To tenfold swiftness—love to feel the shock
Of that great life, and call for it again ?
Or would she shrink beneath the awful joy
Like something smit with lightning ?” As he spoke
A fair girl with her golden hair unbound,
And flying windward, and her lips apart,
Came forth upon a little grassy mead,
An opening in the forest, which the sun
Laid with a golden pavement swift as thought ;
And he who flung that glory on the green
Cast it upon her face as suddenly
And show'd him all its sweetness. “ There she is !
Once more, and many a morn it is I mark
Her advent, as she comes into the light
I fling down for her on the checker'd sward,

That I may see her clearly ; and the moss
Loves to be prest down by her little feet.
The hyacinth, and anemone look up,
And see her blue eyes, and her crimson lips,
And turn away abash'd ; the very brook
Bends to her wistfully, and, when it takes
Her image on its bosom, turns away,
And would bear off her beauty to the sea
Along with his own waters ; but it hath
No art to stay her image when she flies ;
And so it sighs, and whimpers through its reeds,
And would turn back upon its springs again.

II

“ And oh ! what spell hath smitten me a God,
That I too should come down, to gaze at her,
From the glad seats where blue-eyed Hebe runs,
And laughs, and hands the bubbling cups, and mirth
Fails not, nor any tears are shed ? but I
Could weep, that I, the King of light and song,
Am powerless to cast off my crown ; to wear
A few brief years the fashion of a man ;
To make myself Humility ; to serve,
Instead of ruling ; win her heart with wiles
That shepherds ken ; and bring her dappled eggs
From under thickets, in deep nooks of green,
Such as the children know of, and at morn
A bunch of forest flowers, or purple fruits,

Cold with the dawn, the bloom upon their cheeks,
And gems of dew ; and sit by her, and sing
Of hopes and fortunes such as maidens dream,
Close by her side upon a turf'y bank,
Tented o'erhead by the wildrose, our feet
Cushion'd on the lush grass, and cowslips, or
'Mong hidden violets breathing by a stream ;
Suiting my speech to her dear simple soul ;
Till, grown familiar with all lowly loves,
And rustic arts, she should look daily to me,
As for her daily bread. Then would I stir
Her soul with deeper knowledge, and awake
Motions within her that should sleep no more ;
And show her, pointing down the sylvan aisles,
Where the gloom'd woodlands open'd to the sun,
Ladders of light, that led thro' fiery gates
Into the land of wonders. And sometimes
At sunrise I would pour along his beams
Sweet sounds, that should awaken her fullsoon
From happy dreams just breathed into her ear,
That with the first ray leaping on the dark
Should grow from less to more, and strengthening on
Should kindle into torrent harmony
Ineffable, just as the great Sun rose !

III

“ Oh woe is me ! that, in the pride of strength
Of my own life, shielded from human ills.

By virtue of supreme intelligence,
By knowledge of all secrets, all things rare,
Begetting daily wonder and delight,
Filling my cup of being to the brim,
And spilling from it some bright drops for men,
I still forgot that under all mine arts
There burn'd a fire within me, and that fire
Made the thoughts burn that kindled after-thoughts ;
No life without it, for that fire was Love.
Shall Love be then forgot and not avenged ?
Shall Love be hidden, when all other spirits
Work freely and are honour'd ? shall the king,
Who rules the court, be lesser than his slaves ?
And, when they walk in purple, sit at home,
Clad in grey weeds with ashes on his head ?
So, as I wander'd forth at morn, my wont,
Dreaming of music, and of light, I saw
This crown of Nature, this fair mirror wrought
To image all her inmost harmonies ;
A forest daughter, fairer than the Nymphs ;
Worthy as Psyche to be wed in Heaven ;
So that the blue sky cradled in her eyes.
Her heart's soft rhythms were echoes of all sounds
Of wind, and bird, and streams ; and in the folds
Of her deep hair, that gambol'd with the breeze,
Sunlights, and shadows of long summers lay :
All this I knew soon as I look'd on her !

IV

“ O Eros ! Eros ! had I known thee near,
I would have fenced my heart against thy might
With such a sheaf of arrows as, thrown down
Upon thy fatal bow, should have made blind
Thy keen sight, with the dazzle of the gold
Thrown back into thine eyes ! thou wouldest have shriek’d,
And fled in fear, and cast it on the ground !
Or, hadst thou drawn the bow, thou wouldest have glanced
The fierce inflamed shaft so far aside,
It should have smit the little maiden’s heart
Instead of mine ! And then she should have sued
To him for peace, to whom her heart is cold.
I would not scorn her love as she doth mine.
For had I not within me evermore
That heart of fire that kindles noblest arts,
Wisdom and knowledge ? Then, how should it spurn
Beauty, that lives, and moves, and speaks, and sings ;
Beauty that is the crown of all things ; whence
All arts are drawn, to which they are consecrate ;
To which they bow down ever and adore ;
And which they strive for ever to remould ?

V

“ Ah ! ah ! she flies, she flies ! at my approach.
She hides her sweet head in the leafy glooms,
And scarce the glory of her saffron robe
Drown’d in the deepening shadow comes to me.

And now again her fleet foot skims across
A span of flowery sward ; she pants along ;
And now the rough slope of a rocky way
Sorrows her heart, and spurs her eager fears
But stays her steps. Now will I hasten on ;
Now shall I take her, ere she gain the crest
Of yon steep path—fly, sunbeams, after her—
And flood the way she takes with fire—I follow,
Your king—Fly after her, and light me on—
Thro' copse, and thicket, o'er the fragrant cones
Strew'd by the pine—across the bounding brook—
And up the mountainside—Ah ! she is swift
And hath the start of me ! yet not so swift
As sunbeams after her—Fly ! dazzle her eyes
With sudden flashes struck from sparkling flints,
Bright wavelet, leaf, bird's wing, or watchful eye
Of cowering fawn—Fly after her, and melt
Her heart with weariness, her limbs with sloth,
And snatch her breath away ! that I may bring
Life back to her again when I have caught
Her beauty in mine arms, and kiss'd away
Her girlish tears—And see, I fling the light
Beyond the woods and mountains, and it falls
Upon a lovely champaign, green with vines,
And dark with cypress ; and it runs along
The tawny shore of a blue lakelet, fringed
With towered cities ; now she clears the woods
She darts along the sand—I see her no more.

VI

“ Sometimes I laugh, and mock myself to think
Such things should be—What ! shall a glorious God
Find beauty in simplicity ? a charm
In that pure artless smile, some rustic chance
Hath kindled ? It may be a rare bright bird
That she hath caught and caged, and tamed, that leaves
Her gentle hand no more—and sings between
Her dewy lips, held for a space apart
In childlike wonderment—some crimson flower,
Stolen from the green woods which she hath set
In her own garden plot ; or shall I prize
The rapture of those blue eyes, as she hears
Far echoes of a horn among the hills ;
Or clear song of a vintager—blithe heart,
Uttering old simple tales in simplest rhythm ?
Well : who can solve the mystery of Love ?
Or all the threads of Beauty’s magic web,
Shot with all hues ? Is not this maid unlike
All others ? Is not Beauty, howsoever
Begotten, mighty, as when Hebe laughs,
Listening Alcides and his wondrous works ?
Or to the many-voiced harmonies
And charming songs of the Pierides ?
O Beauty, Beauty in each several form
Is a new soul—there is no living thing
Perfect similitude of any other—
For Nature the divine is infinite,

And to repeat herself but only once
Is less than Best—a spot upon the sun—
A void in the immeasurable space—
And there is something in this gentle child
Which neither Heaven nor Earth can wholly match ;
That woos, and wins, and conquers me, to whom
All forms of Beauty are familiar thoughts,
And who have power to vary them at will.
Who oftentimes lavish on the world of men
Stray fancies I have worn, like lovely gems
A moment, or fair vesture laid aside ;
Some blossom, yet unwither'd, which I drop
Upon the heart of some boy-minstrel, laid
In summer dream ; and he wakes up, and sighs
For it, and weeps, and shall forget no more,
Perchance inweave it with his after days
And feeding on the memory of it grow
To better, nobler manhood. And I know
She hath a little humble village heart ;
And one, her playmate, grown to be a youth,
Hath link'd his hopes to hers, her heart to his.
How can I sever them ; for he can sing,
And play the flute, and hold her willing ear
With ballads, and old ditties ? She can see
No heaven beyond his aspect, and their sires
Are glad they should be plighted ; can a God
Divide them now ? Ah me ! then how to win
That sympathy which is the heart of things ?
Which binds the stars together, makes them turn

About each other, and the sun of suns—
Would she be glad to hear of things in heaven,
Whereto the crowning miracles of Time
Are but as shadows? Would the highest thoughts
Draw out that sunlike radiance from her face,
That dazzles me, when some old village crone
Lays in her hair a fond parental hand,
And touches with pale lips her spotless brow,
If I should tell her all the things I know?
Else are we match'd unfairly—for her heart
Leans to that youth; nor can I stand between
Their loves, by making me as one of them,
Vinedresser, reaper, hunter, fowler,—though
I would become her household drudge to take
Her biddings, and to run for her delight,
Could I but sound the cold spring of her heart,
And make it gush in answer to my touch,
Like fountain waters leaping in the light.
What if by patient love and loving arts
I raise her childlike spirit to a height
Her fellows could not hope to win at all,
Though they were all kings' daughters, taught all arts,
And daily listening to the wisest tongues
Of bard and sage? what if I make her mine,
When that young spirit fed with light from me
Is a new Muse? then if I snatch her up
From earthly dust, and her mortality,
And she, no longer flesh and blood, but light
And air, a godlike form walks by my side;

What if I lead her in among the Gods,
And seat her at the selfsame banquet-table ;
Who shall say nay, when I have made her mine ?

VII

“Alas ! it was a mournful day for me
When first I mock’d at Eros, taunting him
With his strange prowess in those childish limbs.
‘Thy bow and arrows are too big for thee ;
Give them to me, whose breadth of shoulder sure
Is fitter for them ; learn to know thy place ;
Learn wisdom from its master, little boy.’
But he turned to me laughing :—‘Say’st thou so ?
Be not too bold, drop the fantastical,
And hearken unto one, who is a child,
And ever shall be. Yes, both Gods and men
Know this and feel it ; if thou art the King
Of Knowledge, know this, I am Lord of Life.
Thou searchest all things of the outward world ;
Thou throwest light into the valleys dark,
And on the mountaintops ; and leaf and flower,
Stirr’d by thy smile, turn to thee, turn and live
Their daily life ; the slumbering lion wakes
At thy call, and the tiny linnet trills.
All feel thy power, and gladden ; but their joy
Is fleeting as thy light ; for, let thy face
Be hidden from them for a day, a month,
A year, they mourn, they faint, they sink, they die ;

The teeming earth is chain'd in endless frost,
And Death and Silence rule it. Thou art great;
But I am greater, for, where I have place,
There is no sorrow, ev'n tho' Youth give place
To white hair, and to palsied limbs, and Death
Is weak to sever those whom I have join'd.
What thou art unto Nature, charming her
With light, and cheering her with song, I am
To the inner life, and innermost. I clothe
The souls of men with a new life, and change them,
Transfiguring evil thoughts, transforming sloth
To vital uses, laying low The Self—
That garden choked with all unfruitful growths,
Greeds, lusts, ambitions, envies, hates, and prides—
I give all things a spirit from within
Working to outward, 'til the plastic forms,
Thou nurtorest, I fashion by my fire
Into a more consummate excellence,
And differing beauty, as though each fresh flower
Had its own conscience and particular will.
But that which is so lovely hath no life,
And that which shapes it is the Life I am.
Thy sun may shine upon an icicle,
And give it seeming warmth, but all is cold ;
My Sun is of the soul, and from within,
Making unloveliness a lovely thing,
Until it glows like beauty—even more—
And making beauty's self so radiant
With the divine, that Gods themselves, and men,

Whose hearts I kindle, live above themselves.
A God becomes more glorious, as my life
Shines through him, and a man becomes a God
With pulses of delight, unfelt till then !
And dost thou dream that thou art Self-sustained ?
Did not my life breathe ever into thine,
As the Sun into the earth, it were as dark
As earth itself without a sun, or star.
I guide thy quicken'd eye, I lift thine hand ;
And then thou piercest through all hidden ways
Of Science, and unrollest as a scroll
Illimitable, the manifold of Art,
Ev'n as the Sun lightens through all dark ways,
And fills them with a gladness not their own.'
Scornful I answer'd :—' I am lord of light ;
I challenge thee to combat ; I will take
A lower form to win this lovesome one,
And I through him will strive with thee through her.' "
Love laugh'd, and even the echoes of his mirth
Startled the king of music ; for the sounds,
In their simplicity and tenderness,
Were sweeter in his ear than all the songs
That he had interwoven with rich chords
Of manifold harmonies, and the best art
That he was proud of. For a moment he
Stood trembling for his throne of eminence ;
Then strode with haughty step and swift, that sped
With painless effort over the broad plains
Up to the mountain ridges, and along

The flaming avenues of glory-clouds,
Higher and higher to the burning gates
Of his own peerless palace in the East.

VIII

Ofttimes at noon, when all the forest slept,
And only the green grasshopper was heard
Ringing amid the glory, she was seen
Under the cool shade of the domed pines,
Or spreading oaks ; for then the fiery light
Drove her into dark coverts, that o'erlook'd
A sloping turf scatter'd with disc and bell,
Amber and azure, by a clear cold brook,
Fill'd from the fountains treasured in the hills
That rush'd by ever with a lulling sound.
One day when she had sung both loud and clear,
And, after her blithe songs, began to talk
To her own heart, and the sweet forest leaves,
Whose whispers would not make her secret known,
With nimble fingers linking all the while
A fragrant necklace of all-colour'd flowers,
A shadow pass'd before her, and she gave
A startled cry ; for close before her stood
One in a hunter's garb, with plume, and bow,
And buskins pearl'd with dews, that he had shook
From grasses, sunless in the sylvan deeps,
In shadow even at noonday. As he gazed,
Down in her blue eyes tenderly, and oft,

She rose to part ; with gentle voice he spoke.
“ Why fly, O little one, if thou hast seen
Nought of me heretofore ; is that a sign
Of any evil in me ? If I had seen thee
Never before this moment, is my sight
Deceived, if it declares it never look’d
On aught before so blissful and so rare ?
And now the time is burning, and the swoon
Of Nature woos to sympathetic rest.”
And turning to her he mark’d her with his eye ;
“ Look up,” he said, “ and thou shalt be as we ;
Knowledge shall give thee all things ; thou shalt be
Hereafter named above the happy Nymphs,
Who bear down blessings over hill and plain.”
And every day that she had seen or heard
His marvels, she went home, and gather’d round
Her chair the simple staring country folk ;
And with her wandering tongue and awful looks
She made the wondrous tale more wonderful ;
Till sudden tears ran o’er their eyes ; and soon
Their whispering tongues grew sad and pitiful.
The loving youth, who knew her inmost thoughts
Hheretofore, when her heart was all his own,
And every secret of that artless soul,
Look’d with sad brimful eyes upon her face,
And terror smote his heart, as though he saw
Some bleeding wound he could not hope to stay.
And rival damsels under pity mask’d
Their biting scorn ; and bad her friends of kin

Look well to her, or she would work some ill
To others, or herself. "Ere Phyllis raved,
And they were forced to bind her little hands,"
Said one, whose bloom was waning, "just such eyes
Glared on us ; and she told us of such dreams,
And saw things pass no other eye could see,
And then she died ; let him beware, who trusts
So wild a thing as Daphne ; 'twere as wise
To clutch a rosebrier swinging in the wind
Over a precipice." Another laugh'd
Grimly, and said, "They have so feasted her
With flatteries of her beauty, and her skill,
That they have turn'd to poisons, like sweet cates
Swallow'd untimely, and the Gods are wroth
To witness such vainglory. Better bear
A homely presence with a sober heart,
Than be the fairest of all lovely forms,
Beloved by all men, hated of the Gods."
All but the heart of him she once had loved
Grew cold to her ; yet she charged not herself
With all this ill, nor blamed the foolish will
That drove her to the forest day by day,
And charm'd her onward in her own despite,
And ever onward, in the vain desire
Of new delight and wonder, like a child
That night by night beholds the same sweet dream,
And loves the darkness for the sake of it.
Thus wax'd she wiser than her lowly friends ;
So that they knew her not and ceased to love.

For now no more she help'd the humble dame,
Her mother, at the loom, or in the field ;
To fill the water-urns, to tend the byre.
The fruits fell down ungather'd from the boughs ;
The goats forgotten wander'd all night long ;
And, when her plighted lover sought for her,
She was not ; and her mother wept, and said :
“ I watch her take the left-hand woodland way,
And vanish thro' the shadows ; follow her,
For much I fear me other longings hold
That heart that once was given to thee all whole.”

IX

One day, when she was weary of her walk,
After long converse with this weird wise man,—
It was a still and slumbrous afternoon,—
He fix'd her with his eyes ; and hers were drawn
To gaze on his, as the poor fluttering finch
Caged with a serpent lapses to its foe.
Stronger and stronger wax'd the mystic spell,
Till she, before his terrible bright orbs,
Fell prone, had he not caught her in his arms ;
Died, or seem'd dead ; for earth, and heaven, and all
The sights, and sounds that but a moment since
Were pictured on the mirrors of her eyes,
Or harp'd upon her ears, were folded up.
And, like the curtain of a theatre,
Oblivion veil'd the present and the past,

Until again the magic veil drawn back
Show'd her another world ; and yet that world
Was but the memories garner'd in the soul
Of him the God beside her, which he drew
Forth from that treasure-house of lovely things,
And gave them the swift wings of his own will
To bear down to her. He beheld her smile
In that weird sleep ; he saw the trembling lips
And awful looks ; he heard her wondering words
Whisper'd with slow solemnity ; he heard
Her answers to his voice, as oft as he
Question'd her of the marvels that she saw :
“ Look, damsel, look, and tell me what thou seest.”

X

“ I see a damsel with a downcast face,
And drooping arms, and folded palms, as one
Shadow'd by such a sorrow as no art
Could solace ; for the heart within her breast,
Widow'd of all its early loves, has found
No better treasure to fill up the loss.
She mutters with pale lips, and calls for death
Rather than desolation. Oh ! I mark
The country folk, that were her well-beloved,
Pass by her ; and the little children flee
As from a nameless peril ; and the old
Whisper together of her, and then sign
With pointed finger the unholy thing,

Smile wintry smiles, half pity and half scorn ;
Then turn aside, and leave her solitary ;
Until she flings herself upon the ground,
And wails in woe. I cannot see her tears
Unmoved myself ; I seem to feel the pangs
She feels myself ; I see her now no more.”
“ Look now again, and tell me what thou seest.”
“ I see her wandering in green wildernesses,
By secret paths untrodden ; and she stays
Her steps full oft to look upon the wealth
Of wild flowers ; and the hidden growths, that lie
Darkling in crannies of the sunless rocks,
Or by lone springs, but which the peasant shuns
As deadly venoms, knowing not their powers.
Or others—which he gathers carelessly,
Bright berries, or pink blossoms, which in sooth
Are deadly foes to flesh and blood—she binds,
Her daily harvest of mysterious things,
Because she feels a force, that spurs her will
To turn her motions, and to raise her hand
To pluck them ; and a tongue that tells her all,
In soundless accents of an inner voice,
Their virtues manifold. But when they see
The maiden passing down the village street,
Laden with her fresh herbs, they shake their heads.
Some laugh, some rail, and others faintly smile ;
But none have pity on one they deem a fool ;
And most are cruel-hearted toward the maid ;
For they are poor, and poverty must toil ;

If not, abide the scorn of them who do.
But now I see her first great grief is past,
Although her face be sad ; and she has hope.”
“Look now again, and tell me what thou seest.”

XI

“I see her bending o'er a sick man's bed.
It is a cottage on a highland slope,
Hard by a stream that rushes over rocks
Down to a teeming dale ; but parch'd and bare
The soil about that hut, and lean the crop
That shivers round it. And now life departs
From the strong arm, and from the loving eye ;
And who shall stay the widow and her babe
When he is not ? And there is weeping now
And loud lament ; but she hath given to him
A cup of wildflower waters, and he sleeps ;
His pains have lull'd, her heart is lull'd with hope.
And see ! he opens on them once again
The kind eyes that were dimming, and he sighs,
‘Ah me ! what do I ? Tell me is it day,
My dreams have made me laggard ; for I dreamt
I went out from my father's house, a youth,
Hopeful and strong, and found thee, dear ; I spoke
Sweet words to thee, and thou didst answer me
In sweeter still ; which made it hard for me
So soon to part from thee as yesterday,
When I was stricken sorely ; and 'tis not so ;

See, I am strong again, I will arise ! ” ”

“ Look once again, and tell me what thou seest.”

XII

“ I see the maid again, but she is changed.
Behold the hopeless one is happy now,
And the forlorn is honour’d ! No more tears ;
No mutter’d accents of unpitying fear,
Or cruel scorn ; she owns a realm-wide name.
And they who fled from her, and spake no word
To comfort her disconsolate, rejoice
To seek her smile, to touch her hand, to hear
A brief word utter’d, or to take from her
A simple boon of healing leaf, or flower.
They lay their palsied at her gate, and bring
The dying to her that they may have life.
The noble flock in chariots, to behold
Her wonderworkings ; rich and poor she sees
Impartially, and, as a queen, rebukes
The great man’s frown, and stays the poor man’s fear,
So that a monarch would not step before
A beggarman, if such was her command.
And none dispute her words oracular,
For she does good to all ; she takes no gift
From either, but their blessing, and is paid
With glory of the bounty she bestows ;
And her own conscience is her treasury.
I see and hear all this as in a dream,

When wondrous things and their interpreting
 Are close together, but we know not how."

"Look once again, and tell me what thou seest."

"I see a change; another day is come.
 For she who sorrow'd once is glorified,
 Some winged power hath snatch'd her from the earth;
 And they who cursed, and mock'd and jeer'd at her,
 Are comfortless. There is a weary cry
 Through all that land for her; a quenchless thirst
 Of many hearts for one; the aged weep,
 And little children stretch their arms for her;
 And even the dumb creatures she hath heal'd
 Look for her, but in vain, for she is not.
 And they have beaten every thorny nook;
 Search'd at the foot of the gaunt precipices;
 Peer'd into cavern'd silences, and swept
 Down their familiar streams far as the sea
 To seek for her; dived down into the deeps,
 And stood on the high peaks, and pierced the glooms
 Of the old forest aisles; but she is not;
 I cannot bear this sorrow, hide it from me."

"Look once again, and tell me what thou seest."

XIII

"Am I on earth, or betwixt earth and heaven,
 Or in the Gods' own paradise of bliss,
 And under shade of their ambrosial bowers?
 Here large dark leaves shut out the sloping sun

Of afternoon, and make a twilight soft,
Burst by quick gushes of the quivering light,
Along the floors, strown with the fragrant leaf
Of myrtle, bay, and laurel, whereon fall,
From interwoven branchage of the roof,
Flower-goblets spilling odours, sprays of rose
Purple and pale ; and 'mid the blossoms droop
Large fruit-globes which the hand can reach and pluck,
With dark and tawny clusters of the vine.
And I can see the smooth wings rainbow-plumed
Of turtles moaning slumbrously ; and mark
The rustle of blithe songbirds ; and the flight
Of pictured moths, that catch the golden sparks,
Dropping 'twixt gloom and gloom upon their scales,
That change to falling gems ; and far within,
Under an opening in the network green,
A fountain leaps up, and takes fire above
In the full day, and falls back in a rain
Of unimaginable wealth, as though
All earth had pour'd its riches from the sky.
And farther still, towards the western side,
A gate, as 'twere into the sun itself.
Such flaming lustre bursts upon me there,
I cannot look upon it ; yet it sends
From out that throbbing depth no sultry breath
Steeping the soul in languors ; all along
This blissful aisle, inwall'd and domed with flowers,
Float lovingly the zephyrs soft and cool,
And freighted from exhaustless treasure-chambers

With all delightsome essences ; my sense
Breathes in new harmonies of odours, flowing
Together, as the ear the mingled tones
Of many notes and divers instruments.
Just in the centre where four alleys meet,
And, overhead, a lighter verdure drinks
Into its green the azure of the skies,
A banquet-table all of precious pearl,
Rimm'd by deep ruby and cool emerald, round,
Of amplest measure ; and the clearer light
Falls on the cups and flagons of pure gold
And carven gems ; the shadows from above
Of tremulous leaf, and crimson anther fall
Dappling the pearl. Lo ! one of aspect grave
Yet beautiful—in majesty a King
Of kings ! his deep eyes and his ebon hair
Majestical and solemn, yet his smile
Sweet as the moonlight of a summerday,
Radiance of sovereign love, and cloudless peace,—
Reclines and lightens round him all the bliss
Of an all-happy, all-possessing Life.
From him the spirits round about him draw
Fresh gladness every moment ; and when mirth
And joyance flag, they look upon his face,
And feel within them a renascent life,
More than from those bright drops, wherewith she fills
Their cups, the cupbearer, whose brows are bound
With amaranth, sprung where the pure rivers run
From founts of Life ; whose laughing aspect haunts

The heart like winsome melodies, that flow
Thro' the enchanted memory, day by day,
Where harp and voice are not, and all is still ;
Like a lone seashell singing to itself
Far from its own blue waters. Now I see
The selfsame damsels wandering all alone,
And wondering at the glory of the world
She hath just enter'd ; and a sudden turn
Brings her in sight of all that company.
She veils her eyes in presence of that host,
Transcending all things. Then a spirit rose,
Joyfully from his seat among the blest,
And, passing to her, took her by the hand,
And led her forward. 'I am he,' he said,
'Whom heretofore, remember, thou didst meet
In thine own woods, and valleys, on the earth ;
From whom the knowledge of all lovely things,
Wisdom beyond thy tender years, and thoughts
That soar'd above the spirit of the time,
Were breathed in thee, that I might bring thee hither,
Hereafter, fitted for a higher life
Than Nymph, or Faun ; and thus to be my joy,
My bride ; no longer earthly of the earth,
But spiritual only, and endued without
With spiritual raiment, everlasting, pure.'

Then, turning to the shining host, he said :
'This is my spouse I told ye of, O Gods ;
I pray ye look on her with loving eyes,
And bid her welcome to your blissful seats,

As worthy to inhabit them with ye.'
Lo ! they rise up with one consent, and one
Acclaim of welcome ! welcome ! and I see
The Father of the Immortal Gods himself
Lift up his arms in blessing. I can see
His peerless daughters wreath the charming dance,
Inimitable motion, perfect grace,
Which only to look on, as she does now,
Moulds her lithe limbs, of plastic essence wrought,
To sweeter symmetry, and clothes upon
With a diviner light. The Queen herself
Of beauty turns upon her all the spells
Of her delights, until her aspect glows
With a new bloom, as when the sunlight pour'd
Thro' the pale petals of a lilybell
Fills it with golden fire. One with a bow
And quiver, and green kirtle, huntress-clad,
And amber tresses, that the dawn hath kiss'd,
And blue eyes, pure as waters of a spring,
Touches her heart, and wandering eyes, till nought
Moves in her but the sacred love of him
Who is her bridegroom. One with helmed head,
And eyes that glitter like a waved sword,
Breathes on her brow her own inspiring breath,
That gives her inner life, and wisdom clear.
Then, swift as summer tempest breathed with sweets,
And glad and strong as torrents smit with light,
The sacred quire, the sisterhood of song
Waken their harps and voices, as he leads

His dazzled bride beside him." "Once again
I bid thee look, and tell me what thou seest."

XIV

"I stand upon an airy steep, that breathes
The summer of the valleys, and the sighs
Of the blue waters seen between the hills:
Between, the tufted capes and promontories
Sway to the balmy gusts, that from below
Bear up to me at intervals the sound
Of multitudinous acclaim, and songs
Of a great festival. And now I see
Banners, and lifted trumpets, and a host
That raise up on their heads the piled wealth
Of vale, and woodland, mount, and rivershore,
Blossom, and fresh green branch, and herb, and fruit,
Which the sun, glancing over forest tops,
And craggy spires, checkers with sudden hues,
Green, purple, golden. Up they came by ways,
That wind thro' lights and shadows; nearer waves
The swell of the proud voices, and the clash
Of cymbals, and the shouting; and a name
That rises, like a star above the sea,
Over the happy tumult; one great name,
'Daphne the blessed, Daphne the divine!'
I stand upon the steps of a tall fane,
That crowns the seaward heights, and the vast doors,
Flung open, show the glory far within

Thro' fragrant smoke of tossing thuribles,
A double shrine ! Again the festal crowd
Utter their hymning voices : ' Hail ! all hail !
Daphne the blessed, Daphne the divine ! '

When she awoke the hymnings and the joy
Were sounding in her ears ; and then she wept,
To think that all the glory she had seen
Was but a vision, and had fled away
To leave her desolate. Oh ! she wept, and call'd
For him who had awaken'd her to things
Beyond this world ; but he was not. No more
She met him in the woods, or by the streams,
Or on the mountainside ; but in her burnt
The fire of a new birth, and the great hope
To reach what he had shown her, and to be
What she had seen herself. She rose, infill'd
With nobler thoughts, and fled with lighter foot,
For the old earth was nothing to her now,
Save that the fleeting hours were as the steps
Of the great stair that vanishes in heaven !

XV

And now the youth, whose wistful eyes and heart
Had followed her since they were boy and girl,
Grew sick, as a first flower smit by the frost.
And, though he went forth daily to his toil,
He sigh'd where he had sung ; and hopes, which once
Had nerved his hand, gave place to doubt and fear,

That sunk his heart, until his arm grew weak ;
And half the task, which he had daily done
Unharass'd, now seem'd heavier than the whole.
He saw her not ; and so his eye grew blind
To the fair Nature once seen best through her.
He heard her not, and now his ear was deaf
To the sweet birds that sang of love for him.
At last they bore him in no more to pass
Fieldward at morn, and back to her at even.
And all his hope was to behold once more
The beauty that had slain him by its scorn ;
To take a last hold of the unyielding hand ;
To meet once more the unrelenting eyes,
That once had given him welcome, oft as chance
Brought them together at greenwood, or glen,
And that the dying might with deathless love
Vanquish the living and unloving heart,
And by forgiveness move the unforgiving.
So, when his hour was come, and weeping friends
Stood by his bed, and to the clouded eyes
The sun wax'd darker momently, she pass'd
Wandering, she cared not whither ; so her hours
Might reap fresh lore, fresh wonders, fresh delights
Of Knowledge, in obedience to the laws
And counsels gather'd from the lips of Him,
Who wander'd with her in green solitudes
At noonday, or beneath the summer stars ;
And show'd her all things, not as schoolmen do,
But as the Immortals, making darkness bright

By flashes, sudden as self-kindled stars,
Of mystic sympathies ; rough places plain ;
Untwisting ravell'd knots of secrecy
By some sweet symbol ; teaching thought itself,
As though it were a song, and building up
Intelligence by pleasant arts, that seem'd
Sweet pastime ; so that her great name might grow
To be a godlike thing, her soul a star
Set in the far heaven of Futurity,
To look on thro' the grey folds of the Past.
She wander'd by, and heard the low lament.
She stood, and question'd a young village maid :
“ Is there one sick ? Then suffer me to pass,
For I may heal him.” And she stept between
Neighbours and friends, who wonder'd and made way.
But, when he saw her there, the filmed eyes
Flash'd suddenly with all the fire of youth.
He raised his arm, a wondrous light of joy ;
A smile of glory play'd upon his lips ;
Then the arm fell, the eyes grew dim and dark ;
And, just as she remember'd all the past,
His soul went forth. But she sent up a cry,
That might have follow'd him beyond this world ;
And without words it told the tale of all
Her wild remorse, her penitence, and pain.
And then she raised her voice in frenzied tone :
“ Come back, come back ! Was it not three days back
We met where the home valley meets the brook,
And plighted, each to other, loving troth,

And to be wed ere summer ? O my heart !
What serpent's poison hath benumb'd it since ?
What do I say ? Three days ? Ah ! so it seems,
Now that I look upon his face again.
And yet I know not, now I think of it,
If they be days or years that are gone by,
So many marvels have possess'd my sense ;
So many thoughts have flooded thro' my soul ;
For all the hours between are as the night,
Whose darkness is but air, and yet it veils
Near and dear objects from us, till the morn.
Whence do I come, and whither have I stray'd ?
Surely the past is an unreal thing,
When I, methought, met with a man I fear'd,
And yet he held me near him with such might
I could not flee. And then I lost my fear,
And listen'd to his words ; and then, it seem'd,
Resistless power gat hold of me, and sway'd
The motions of my mind unto his will.
'Look up,' it said, 'and thou wilt be as we.
Knowledge shall give thee all things ; thou shalt be
Hereafter named above the happy Nymphs
Who bear down blessings over hill and plain.'
Come back, come back ; if thou art dead, come back ;
I cannot be without thee, if thou wilt not
I will go to thee quickly. Oh ! 'tis not death ;
He only sleeps, and I will wake him soon."
She said, and placed her lips upon his lips,
Her brow upon his brow, and pluckt a bunch

Of wild herbs from her bosom, gather'd where
No foot had been in balmy wildernesses.

"He show'd me this," she said, "I thank him now,
Though he hath turn'd my heart from all it loved ;
He bade me touch the lips and eyes of those
Who slept in deepest trance, like death, with mine,
And let them breathe the spirit of these flowers,
They shall unclose their sealed eyes and live ;
He is not dead, but sleeps." "Alas!" they cried,
Who stood about her weeping, "thinkest thou
When the heart stirs not, and the breathless lips
Are shut together, and the eyes are blind,
That there is hope?" But she put forth her hand,
Not doubting, with a fixed awful look,
Moveless as marble image. For a space
There was no change ; and those about him sigh'd,
And shed fresh tears ; but in her eyes a light
Began to kindle, then a flash of joy,
And then she gave a cry that shook the night,
"He lives, he lives!" drew up his hand with hers,
And the eyes open'd, and the bosom heaved,
And the warm rose came back into his cheek ;
"He lives ! I thank thee, O I thank thee, God,
Or man for this ; the evil thou hast wrought,
Thyself hast heal'd thro' this frail hand of mine!"
She cried, and join'd her palms in silent prayer.
And he rose up, and round about him gazed,
And wonder'd when he saw her, and he smiled,
And sigh'd, and with a faint voice, "It was death,

And I was passing where no sorrows are,
And hast thou bad me back, O cruel love,
To make my life unlovable again ?
Oh ! rather kill me again, and once for all,
By telling me thou never wilt be mine ;
And I will sleep a sleep, beyond the power
Of any arts to waken, or any will."
"O love, dear love," she cried, "whom I had slain,
Had not the marvels shown me in the woods,
And secrets taught me by a matchless man,
Wisest of men, if he be not a God,
Brought thee to life ; albeit he thought that thou
Wouldst vanish from before him, leaving me
Free to his arts ; he then—to woo and win—
Fill'd me with his own spirit, and made me more
Than all I ever dreamt of, more than all
My village kindred, ev'n as the Oread nymphs,
And Hamadryads ; then, beloved one,
Himself hath thus avenged thee on himself.
While all my heart at sight of thee again
Thee stricken nigh to death, given back to me,
Straightway forgets all knowledge but this one,
The memory of our childhood, youth, and love,
And plighted vows ; forgoes all hopes of power
And glory ; all treasures save thy heart alone."
He stretch'd his arms, and she laid on his breast
Her beating heart ; and all the villagers
Shouted for joy ! Then in a moment all
The dusky spaces fill'd with light, and there

Right in the middle of the chamber stood
Two radiant ones ; the right-hand spirit smiled,
And turn'd unto the other, who was sad.
“ Say not that I have vanquish'd thee,” he said ;
“ Thyself hast turn'd thine arrows on thyself,
Thinking to strike me ; but, 'twixt me and thee,
Need be no strife, no victory ; if I won
The maiden's heart back to its early faith,
Returning love, and penitential tears
Had been in vain, but for thy power alone,
The wisdom without which love can but fail.
O brother, we are one ; for I am thine,
And thou art mine, altho' thou knowedst not.
Thou canst not know, unless I warm thy will ;
And I am nothing if thou aid me not ;
Together we are conquerors, all in all ;
Henceforth no strife shall separate us more !”

XVI

Then those Immortals on each other look'd
With such benign divinity, that all
The air was thrill'd with low sweet melody,
And breathed with happy spirits of such flowers
As bloom not in this world. The thickets near
Broke into song, that rippled o'er the leaves
Far as the purple highlands ; and at once
A Dawn came flooding o'er the mountaintops,
Such as was never seen until that day.

The men and maidens lifted up their hands
In thanksgiving, and a sweet matin hymn
Flow'd heavenward, with the sound of silver streams
And early birds. Slowly the Immortals waned
Out of their sights into the golden mists
That bathed the valley ; and then suddenly
Eros and Phœbus, Love and Wisdom, rose
Up from the earth, and flew along the streams
Of Morn ; and, as the Sun broke o'er the hills,
They vanish'd, drown'd in floods of Fire and Light,
Mingled in One, and nevermore to part,
Each to the other kin for evermore:
And far beyond the Sun of Nature pass'd
On to the Living Centre of all things.

CYPRUS

PYGMALION

I

A MAYMORN by the azure sea ! a morn
So vital in the freshness of its youth,
That Sorrow should have fled before its beams,
As from the crimson lips and laughing eyes
Of some fair girl, bent down to look on him,
And charm him into mirth, and merry songs.
The warm wind smote the tops of blooming briars,
And caught away their roses ; and the sound
Of silver ripples, chiming o'er the shells
And golden sands, was as a low-toned hymn
Chanted to the clear peaceful morning skies
By the delighted waters ! Not far off,
Nor yet so near as to o'ercome the tongues
Of Solitude, the City with its towers
Sparkled from out green gardens ; and I stood
Gazing about me, in that blissful hour
That brought no bliss to me, but made me sadder

With thoughts of all those ills that had been done
In mine unhappy island-home, whose seas,
And shores, so lovely in the morning light
Were overcast, as by a thunder cloud,
By memories of blood, that seem'd to rise
Between me and the sun. I who had throned
The beautiful within my heart of hearts
Yearn'd for some hush'd spot out of reach of man,
Where I might worship it in perfect peace,
And purest passion. On me daily grew
That passion, strengthening till it overcame
All other motions of the soul, and arm'd
My heart 'gainst light affections. No dark eyes
Of the loose laughing daughters of the isle
Could stir me, when I set them by the side
Of that one Form, invisible to sight,
Visible to the Soul, which day and night
I feasted on, till the Ideal grew
More real than all things outward, and I saw
More with an inner sight than with mine eyes.

II

Then said I: "Pardon, Goddess of this isle,
Urania ever-blessed, if I turn
Less toward thine altars crown'd with flowers, than back
To the all-lovely image in my heart,
And worship there—Oh pardon me—methinks
I see in peerless beauty, there enshrined,

As fair a Goddess as was ever crown'd
Upon Olympus ; and at times I dream
That such a radiant image can be nought
Except thine own—thus mirror'd in my soul
As thy white-column'd temple in the blue
Of this calm sea—so that I faint, I sigh,
' If this could be ! Ah ! no, it cannot be !'
And, if it were, can mortal be beloved
By the Immortals ? Can they love them ? No !
'Tis but a dream ; a spirit-picture, drawn
By many an unrecorded influence,
As many diverse odours, born from far
And near, from hill and plain, from leaf and flower,
Pour'd thro' the sense, commingle into one ;
As shadows of the myrtle slopes behind
I see before me now ; and evermore,
Though the wild waves and storm-winds shatter them,
They will return in the returning hours
Of sunny windless calm ; so, 'twixt all change
Of momentary troubles, tumults, cares,
Discourse, diversions, in me rises up
The one bright Image, sweet, ineffable !

III

" Oh ! mystery, beyond all knowledge, how
Can such things be ? Great Powers above us all,
Hath some one from amid ye made a heaven
Within me, that I see, with such clear sight,

The peerless brow beneath the golden hair,
The blue eyes, and the parted crimson lips,
Whose lavish tenderness dissolves my being,
And wins me from all thoughts of mortal beauty ?
Therefore, henceforth if I withhold my heart,
Goddess, from such affections and delights
As Thou inspirlest in this blissful clime
And fair land, where thine odorous temples shine,
And the sweet breath, from inland gardens blown,
Kisses the sea breeze from the snowy crests
Of the warm waves, and all things speak of Thee ;
If I withhold me, and about me gird
An adamantine corselet, proof against
All human influences, light of eyes,
Lovesongs, melodious voices ; all soft thoughts
Born of the spring, and youthful moods ; and those
Swift radiances, that pass across the face,
Flash'd from the heart, and are reflexes pale
Of inner ardours deeper than all thought ;
Dumb raptures, and unutterable thrills,
Pulses of instincts from unfathom'd deeps
Of Being, which do in a moment melt
Hard hearts, as adamant with lightning-points ;
All these I war against if from without
They reach me ; now they reach me from within.

IV

“ Pardon me then, dear Goddess, if this form,
This matchless picture, or this glorious dream

Within me, wins from me a nobler love,
And purer aspirations than belong
To aught without me. Tho' there come to me
No hope through all my lonely mortal life,
(Worse widowhood, which weeps not for the Good
Departed, but the Good that cannot be),
But as I live so also shall I die ;
Yet still must worship at that inner shrine
Where She is glorified : but this I vow,
No outward act that shall dishonour thee,
Urania, whose heavenly purity,
Profaned here, is well nigh laugh'd to scorn
By the lax life of heartless Vanity ;
Where Summer passions, like the gaudy fly,
In one day live and die ; who call that Love,
Which, as a lightning-flash, or falling star,
Burns, and goes by, and is no more remember'd.
If I deny me any mortal love,
However holy, truthful, chaste and pure,
I will refrain from all that in the life
Might shame thy Majesty, Urania.
Then pardon me, oh pardon me ! but not
The less shall all my coming days be given
To one sole labour, one surpassing toil.
I will not sleep till I have pray'd to dream
Of that rare phantasy, that it may be
The more impress'd upon my inner sense ;
And, when I wake, the beauty that I see
May be transferr'd with might, and very truth

To the dead marble, till I make it live,
And strive thro' years of life, albeit in vain,
To show that outward which I shrine within,
Beauty though imaged, unimaginable !
Till Time, through all his Future, shall delight
To look on that which this inspired hand
Shall fashion ; and I bid Death stand and wait,
Till I have multiplied a thousandfold
Each lovely change of that immortal form ;
And left so vast an heritage of Art
To coming generations, they shall cry
'Enough ; we feel despair ! to us belongs
Only to look and live by loving these ;
We can add nought, except our endless praise !'"

V

Alas ! how little did I understand
My little strength. No sooner did I set
My hand to throw forth into outward act
The spiritual impress, and to force
The silent marble to give back to sense
The soul's creation, than a wondrous change
Pass'd over me. Now 'twas no more in me
The adoration of a mortal man
For high immortal presences ; a man's
Far off and passionless humility.
Methought, with every motion of my hand,
The invisible became a real thing,
And more and more wrought on me day by day,

Till I cried wildly, "Oh ! I'll give it life !
And wherefore no ?" The very thought begat
A sudden incarnation of the dream,
As 'twere, and more enchanting than itself
Which I had deem'd without a parallel.
And now it seem'd a mockery to unfold
Such thoughts from marble ; Oh ! a childish play,
A poor vain pastime ! Could not steadfast will,
Earnest, intent desire with patient toil
Become resistless ? I would give it life,
Give strength, and motion to a shade, and make
The metaphysical an ultimate
In Nature, clothed with fitting attributes.
Then mortal weakness mock'd me, and I cried ;—
"Oh for some God, able to read my heart,
And see all there, to work for me awhile !
Or still, ah still, I must bow down to toil
To make thought fruitful." Madness seized on me.
For now I thought that verily the dream
Would be fulfill'd in time ; that Faith, such Faith,
Would work me miracles ! then let me work
The irresponsive substance, till it lives.
For the cold senseless marble, void of warmth
And sympathy, and gladness, were it wrought,
Ev'n by the fervent genius of a God,
Into consummate grace, without the fire
Of love that moves this hand, would be as far
From my blest image, as the dead cold moon
Far from the blest Midsummer sun at noon !

VI

And, after many a day, when my long toil
Was well nigh o'er, the sweet delirium
Of Phantasy wax'd wilder than before.

I cried, "She lives, she breathes." And even then

A red glow from the sunset smote upon

The loveborn image, and my madness grew.

Rapt, and entranced, and drown'd in my own dream

I stood apart ; to make the ideal true

I snatch'd a scarlet robe, and chain of gold,

And threw it round the fair cold marble neck

The work of my own hands ; and now my work

Seem'd perfected ; it was as Life itself ;

So living-true, that for a little space

Lost to all knowledge of the world without

And world within, I fell down at the feet

Of the unconscious form myself had wrought !

" Divine Creation, born of love inspired !

Shall all be given unto thee, but the gift

Most needful, power of motion, feeling, act

To speak, to turn upon my tender eyes

The tenderness of thine ? to crown my toil

With that crown of all blisses, love of him

Who made thee lovable ? Hear, hear me, love ;

Look on me, or turn from me ; " and I wept

In that sweet agony of Phantasy,

Till sense, from weariness of Nature, fail'd,

And I sank down upon the marble floor

In a long swoon, broken by troubled thoughts.
And, while I lay tranced in that sudden swoon,
Mine inner eyes were open'd, and I saw
Round me, as in a dream, heroic men,
Tall as the Gods. I heard them speak together,
A sound like tuneful waters, of deep things
Veil'd from the thought of man. "Seest thou," said one,
"This poor, sick youth, who would transfer the power
And life we give him momently to cold
Unsympathetic stone? how nigh to death
He lies, as though in very truth his life
Had been bestowed upon the bloodless shape,
And he was left without it; yet he hears
Our voices, and, albeit his natural sense
Is closed to Space and Time, he now may learn
That Man is twofold; now the body lies,
As it might lie ev'n if the soul were fled;
And, if it were so, yet he were not dead.
For, though it be not whisper'd on the earth,
And may not be for cycles yet to come,
There is One Life, but one, that rolls through All,
As the circumfluent, ebbless fire and light
Floods from the Sun for ever; and fills in
The natural forms with being; so all the lives
Of all the spirits, both of men and gods,
Are but the vessels, fill'd from one great spring
According to their measures; and, as that Life
Can never die, so man must live for ever.
When one is stricken to the earth, as he,

This boy, by death himself, last ill so call'd,
'Tis Death himself shall take him by the hand,
And bring him home, that home where we are now,
A swifter spirit with a nobler form
And fairer youth ; tho' differing yet the same ;
Built of such substance, as shall nevermore
Take hurt from flood, or fire, or rending steel,
Or pestilential air. Let him remember,
The thing that now lies stretch'd upon the floor
Is not the Man, altho' the beating heart,
The throbbing pulse, and all the wondrous ways
Of life within his limbs surpass the dreams
Of Poet, or of Sage, in miracle ;
But that which sees, and hears, and loves, and fears,
And thinks, and knows, and has the power to move
This fallen creature that men take for Man.
And yet the glittering eyes, the laughing lip,
The utterance, articulate and clear,
And all that seems fair and majestical,
Is but the veil, that hangs before the shrine,
That hides the Oracle which it reveals.
Men meet together, but man sees not man ;
Only the flowing robe that circles him.
So the smooth outward tissues of the body
Shut up the mighty Universe within,
So fearfully and wonderfully made.
This youth may know now that he lives, although,
Were he to see another stricken thus,
He would cry 'Dead ! ' "

Another voice was heard—
“ How long shall Man live on in a vain dream
That what is outward is Reality,
The Inward but a Shadow? that the Form
Is the true Man, and not his Minister?
That, with the ruin of the Natural frame,
Thought dies, as heat and motion fly from it?
That, from circumference to centre, Life
Proceeds, and not contrariwise? that Nature
Is the great source of Life, not Life of Nature?
Hence have they deified the Natural,
Beyond which they see nothing, and, led on
By Sense, they worship the Material
And Sensuous. The loveliness of Shape,
The bloom of Youth, which are the outward signs
Of inward states, to them are all they dream
Of lovable. Strength, Symbol of true Power,
They venerate, but not the power for Good
Strength images; delights, which thro’ the sense
Picture the Soul’s diviner attributes,
To them are all things: so that Pleasure, Lust,
Glory, and Pride, and Vengeance, are their Gods,
Raised from the dust to sit on thrones in Heaven.
But oh! the Life divine, the only Life
Earthward descends, and not ascends from it;
And secretly, and yet most surely works
Within the inmost temple of man’s soul,
Against the many tongues of his Self-love,
Whispering with still small voice, when they are mute.

Behold the earth in winter, how it sleeps
Formless, and void ; no hue of beauty there,
No heat of motion, as the tranced form
Of this poor boy. But now the spirit of Spring
Bends o'er it with her warm and pulsing wings,
And runs through all the labyrinthine walks,
And mystic ways of Nature ; and behold
She is transfigured, ev'n as the face of Man,
Awakening after slumber in the morn,
Laughs at the first sight of the rising Sun ;
And lo ! the dull cold apathy of sleep
Lightens with all-inimitable grace,
And then, then first the Man begins to live,
As the dawn-light first glancing o'er the earth
Brings it its glory and its beauty back.
The Life Divine raises, and re-creates,
Subliming into his Self-consciousness
The Natural Man, till he, who was in sleep
The shadow of Death, at morn becomes a God !
Because 'tis then that this one Life Divine—
Which is Man's too, so far as he can bear,
And is the Man—again begins to move
Within the Finite. Nature is not Lord,
But slave of Man, and to his spirit bows,
As every leaf of a great forest moves
Before the winds of morn. And were it not
That this one Life, this one Eternal Life,
This Infinite, for wisest purposes
Had suffer'd Man to hold his Finite being,

As 'twere his own possession—(that he might,
Feeling his weakness, his infirmities,
His many natural evils—feeling too
That his own strength can never raise him up
Beyond the accusing voice of Conscience—voice
Divine that whispers to him what he is,
His many wants, his follies, and his pride,
That he might call upon that One great Life,
For help ; to the All-father lift his hands,
And cry, as doth a weeping, woful child)
Were it not so each day, and every hour—
Did he but know his Life were not his own—
He would stand, as that marble statue, cold,
His heart unmoved, his lips expressionless,
No hope, no fear, no prayer to wing to God !
See, how the pale cold marble he hath touch'd,
Which hath no life, but such as atoms have
That cling together, from his soul hath caught
Some of its light, and, could he give it life,
Which it might feel, as Man himself, its own.
Then, if he hid himself behind a screen,
What would the Statue think, to find itself
Alone, with senses waken'd to the world,
And, tho' with no more soul than hath a bird
That breaks its shell, and looks around, and sees
Amid the vast, and bright, and wonderful,
Only its mother, and a grain of corn ;
Would it not feel, 'I live ' not 'Who hath made me ?'
And, did he step forth, and with rude dominion

Rule o'er the fearful creature, day by day,
And hour by hour, revealing to it more
Its abject, utter weakness ; showing it
His own great riches, and its penury ;
And that it could not will, or feel, or move,
Without his license ; would it not lament
The Being without liberty, and crave
The free wing of the lark, the glorious strength
Of the wild horse, the blisses of the bee,
That sings and roves ? Would it not, could it speak,
Say, 'Wherefore hast thou made me thus a slave,
While all things else, like thee, are glad and free ?'
So hath the Infinite in wisdom framed
The Finite ; on dead dust hath set the seal
Of his own power and beauty, and hath made
That dust obedient to the Life, which He
Hath breathed into it ; then hath hid Himself
Behind the Selfhood of the Man, that he,
Wandering alone in light and dark, might feel
At length, that he had need of other strength
Than his own selfhood, in this mighty World
Of unimaginable wonderment ;
And weep, and tremble, and at last behold
Dimly, as 'twere afar off, the All-father
With arms stretch'd down to him, although he dwells
Not far off, but so nigh to each of us,
That, if His Life were not ours, we were not !"

VII

No sooner were they parted, than I seem'd
To wander by the long shores of the sea,
Far off to silent nooks, and shelly grots,
And turn'd aside into green glades, and glens,
And myrtle valleys, by the bowery huts
Of fishers, and of country-folk. The sun
Twinkled thro' the twined leaves, and blossoms pale,
And made the lilies of the Spring with light
Transparent, touch'd the cypresses with gold.
Not far away a low sound of the waves
Chimed to the linnets' twitter, and the flutes
Of many blackbirds, while I stood to breathe
The sweet airs, charm'd with the soft hour and clime.
I saw a young face, peering thro' the boughs
Of a roselaurel ; what a face ! O Heaven !
It must be—it is she ! the very form
Of my own marble wonder ! but withal
That which poor marble lack'd, the Self—the Life !
I stretch'd my arms, I wept, I cried in sleep,
And my own passion woke me. And lo ! the night
Had fallen ; scarce a glimpse of twilight cheer'd
The still cold chamber ; and the mantled form
Was hidden from me in the thickening gloom.
Now, for the rosy kisses of the sun
A shapeless blackness met my yearning eyes ;
Instead of Youth and Beauty dreary Death.
But what is this ? is it the rising moon ?

Or glimmering sheen of burning from afar ?
For, quick as thought, a golden radiance
Rain'd thro' the roof upon me, and lit up
The chamber, waxing every moment more
Till it grew sunlike, and so dazzling-bright
I veil'd my eyes ; and soon the glory wrapt
The marble image in its folds. O Heaven !
And was it giving it the life I dream'd,
Ev'n as the sunbeam opens the dead seed
And speeds the blossom ? for methought those eyes
Began to move, the quivering lips to part,
And the whole form to pulse with fires of life.
I smote my brow, that I might know for sure
That I was not adream ; I cried aloud,
As dreamers are not wont, and all the walls,
Columns, and arches echoed to the sound.
And, as the echoes died in whispers off,
The sound was taken up by the other sounds,
That came like silver tones of virgin tongues,
And seem'd to float down on the starry beams
Nearer and nearer, till they ceased. And then
I heard another voice articulate :—
“ I know thy thoughts, and life, I heard thy prayer.
The pure heart only wins the beautiful ;
Choked by the serpents, of Self-love, and Pride,
It is defiled, dishonour'd ; the dark heart
Is not a temple where white Innocence
Can flee for refuge ; Beauty there enshrined,
However pure, and spotless in itself,

Is there transfigured, and becomes at once
Dark as the shadow by white marble cast,
The inverse of itself. Thou hast not sought
The haunts of those who crown themselves with flowers
That droop and wither in one hour, like their
Brief blisses rooted in the dust of Death,
Where no good is ; the revel, and the dance,
And midnight winecup, thou hast scorn'd and fled.
All mockeries of the Beautiful and True,
Done in a day to be undone the next,
Thou hast despised ; the light love, and the vain
Pledge, and the joy, no sooner won than lost,
Like the torn petals of a trodden rose.
Thy heart was fix'd upon a godlike dream,
A pure white image of a purer thought,
Where twin hearts thirsting after Good and Truth
Blend into one thro' mutual sympathy.
The love of the one heart is taken up
And planted in the other, as chord to chord
Trembles, when both are knit in unison.
Thy pure Ideal was Immortal Love,
Imperishable essence, not to cease
With this brief life of Nature, but pass out,
And waxing ever onward in fresh strength,
New raptures, daily kindled ecstasies,
Become a lamp, illumining all things,
A fire subduing all things to itself,
A power to melt and mould all outward forms,
Like as thy hand the marble ; as the will

DIRECTS, and guiding intellectual light ;
Until the heaven within thee shall unfold
And fashion to itself an outward world,
And sky above thee brighter than all skies
That spread themselves over this earth of thine,
According to thy state ; a purer air,
A more enchanting earth, a nobler sun,
A Universe of wonders from without
Painting a Universe of bliss within.
Thy state was known to the Immortal spheres.
So we have led thee onward step by step
Unto this day ; the very fire within thee
We breath'd into thee, and the glorious form,
Which thou hast wrought in marble, is a type
Of thine Eternity ; behold it there.
It is a shadow of the life to be,
When inner states shall mould the outward shows
Which shall react upon the inner state
And multiply all joys to manifold.”
“ Alas ! ” I cried, “ my spirit only lives ;
But this cold form is dead ; though sometimes—ay
Full oft I dreamt that it had taken life,
And woke to find it but a dream—and hold
Myself the slave of things impalpable
That are as truth, last night I dreamt 'twas so.”

VIII

“ Last night thou dreamedst,” said the Voice ; “ that dream
Was sent to thee, and was not sent in vain.

It was the shadow of a day long past,
When thy young heart was stricken unawares
With the rare beauty of a face, beheld
But for a moment ; but that moment, set
And framed in adamant, lived in thy heart,
Hid like the burning diamond in a mine.
The troubles of the time—the whirl of change—
The waves of many sorrows have roll'd o'er
That moment, like the great seas o'er a pearl ;
But when the flood reels back, the pearl is seen.
So when the tumults of the time had pass'd,
Faint influences, like the smell of flowers
In twilight, or the inexpressible
Sweet light that hovers 'twixt the Day and Night
When all is hush'd, dim glory, as a dawn
Rose in thy heart ; and by our strength and power
It strengthen'd, till it burst into a sun ;
Seized hold of thee as only Real can ;
Possessing thee, as with a double life,
It strung thee to a supernatural might
Of effort, raised thee to a godlike height,
And wrought in thee divinely ! till at length
The love, that burnt within thee, show'd without,
And centering in that marble image—thy
Creation—was reflected back to thee,
Stirring the soul's faint sparkles till they broke
In flame. And thou wert mad, as men would say,
Who see the states they cannot reach unto,
Like a far fire upon a mountain-peak

Dilating in a mist ; or, envying bliss
They cannot feel, they breathe on it with lies ;
Till the world, looking for divinity
In the bright mirror of a godlike soul,
Sees but a cloud !”

IX

—Again the heavenly voice
Sweeter than song—“ I bid thee have no fear
Lest thy fond love shall have no counterpart.
She too hath had her dream ; the soft blue eyes
Thou sawest in the thicket met thine own,
And sure as light reflected in a mirror,
The ardent loving wonder in thy face
Flew back to thee out of the Maiden’s heart.
From that day forth in noonday quietness
Of midnight slumber those dark eyes of thine,
Thou raptured youth, flashing beneath thy curls,
As starlight thro’ the clouds, appear before her.
She worketh too, but not thy handicraft,
The joy of coming ages ; man must throw
His strength out or must perish ; woman lives
And feeds upon celestial phantasies,
Ye have each pictured faithfully the other.”
“ Tell me, O Goddess, must I only live
To love my own creation, or wilt thou
Give life to this sweet work of hand and brain ?
For where, oh where to find her, who hath lived
Within this heart ? haply she lives no more,

And the hot whirlwinds of revolt and war
Have fallen on her, swept her from the stem
Of household safety, like a broken rose,
That falls ungather'd ; or some other man
Hath wedded her, and now I am forgot,
Or but remember'd as a thing so vain
That with her dreams she only ranks it now."

"I will give life to this thy marble love,"
Urania cried, "Live, live !" Again the sound
Of the sweet silvery voices came anear ;
The golden light flow'd round more gloriously,
And it began to move ! "O Heaven !" I cried,
"What thing is this ? wonder unparallel'd !"
Down from the pedestal it softly stept,
And slowly drawing back the veil, I saw
The countenance that I had carved in stone
Glowing and vital ! eyes, whose fixed orbs,
Senseless and colourless, had mock'd my sense,
And only took their life from my own soul,
Moved radiantly, deep blue, with golden fire
That wander'd thro' them ; cold, though rounded cheeks,
Bloom'd rosy clear ; and then the sculptur'd lips,
Tho' matchless in their form, unmoved by joy
Or sorrow, now wax'd scarlet, dewy, warm.
And then I heard a voice ; oh yes ! I heard
A girlish voice, sweet as a valley brook,
Low-tongued and musical. But, ere she spoke,
The Goddess spoke again ; "Oh pardon her,
That she hath sought thee ; is not this an answer

Unto the plaint that said ‘Where shall I find her?’
She hath been led unto thee by sweet impulse
Imbreathed ; this is she whom thou didst see
In the rose-thicket on that morn of May,
When fearful thoughts were stronger in thy heart
Than memories of young beauty ; so the last
Vanish’d from off the earth, to live within thee,
In thy deep heart’s most inmost sanctuary,
No more of Space and Time, but, as the Gods,
Immortal. Take her, she is worthy of thee.
For she hath fed on wildflowers, and hath drunk
The dews of Nature ; she hath mark’d the changes
Of the swift year, with love’s own faithful art ;
Sweet pictures in the chambers of her heart
She hath hung up ; clear morns, and glowing evens ;
Green turfwalks murmuring with the noonday bees,
And summer birds ; and they shall never fade ;
The majesty of midnight with its stars
And summer moon ; and she hath loved to watch
When the dread winter winds began to blow ;
To see the moon run up the thunder-hills ;
The glory of the tempest, and its gloom
Rended with fire ; and all things that are sweet,
Noble, and pure, have made of her one heart
A mirror that shall give back all of thine.
Beauty is Beauty’s mate ; thus should it be ;
And Phantasy, that makes thee what thou art,
Breathing from thee upon the magic mirror,
Will call to life, as often as thou wilt,

Thine own best thoughts for answer, and shall burnish
Those hues, and forms of memory, till they live
A better life impregnated by thine :
So love in ye shall be a twofold one.
Not only this, but whatsoe'er she lacks
Thou wilt supply, and what in thee is not
She shall give to thee : thus for evermore
Shall ye spread in variety, for ever
Be centred more and more in Unity,
Till everlasting *Æ*ons shall but serve
To bring ye more together !” As she spoke
Again the music breathed, the voices sang ;
And subtle influences penetrating
The soul, expanding and exalting it,
As with invisible wings, drew us together.
She moved, then bent down to me, and I leant
Towards her ; one hand upon my shoulder laid
She prest the other to her heart ; those eyes,
Those deep blue eyes, with their soft lightnings turn'd
To mine, those lovely lips a little parted ;
The bosom heaving softly as the swell
Of summer waters. Then, oh then, I knew,
What was the beauty, born of Phantasy,
What that of Nature ! Fancy-born, it is
Imperfect, unsubstantial, insecure ;
Tho' from that very imperfection springs
The ardent thirst to see it perfected ;
So we mistake Love's ghost for Love itself.
As in the moonlight hueless, formless flowers,

That stir not, and the garden leafage dark
Beget in us the longing to behold them
Array'd in colours of the morning sun,
Their bridal robes kist by the loving light,
The living loveliness of Nature's Self.

'Twas this then I had dreamt of ; it was this
That warm'd my heart, which fondly I believed
Stirr'd by the outwrought image in my brain ;
And now 'twas true ! oh true ! And Phantasy
Kindled no moony lamp within my soul,
Yet needs must I have turn'd to the sweet youth
And perfect beauty of this peerless one,
As to my lodestar ; so the total Earth,
And its inhabitants would hail at once,
With songs and rapture, the first break of day,
The sunrise, had it never dawn'd before.
But tenfold was the fervour of that fire,
The light of that reality, which, drawn
Into the furnish'd chambers of the heart,
Hung with the mirrors of my phantasy,
From each received an image of itself,
Kindling afresh its warmth, its light, its life !
Some Spirit rare had sung to me a song
Faint, sweet, ineffable, and dying off,
And then returning ; now my heart and brain
Were filled to overflow with echoed notes
Golden, and everlasting of the full
Celestial harmony ! Now had I heard
That pæan of the heart, that triumph-voice

Of Nature and of Being, bliss no more
To be exceeded ; which to drink and die,
And fly away for ever from this world
Of change, and shelter underneath the wings
Of some all-potent God of Gods, who can
Shield from all evil, Man might yearn, might pray for !

X

As were my thoughts, ev'n such were hers, I knew.
And so she told me in sweet after-hours
Of calm. Such was that subtlest sympathy
On which all true love builds, and which we pour'd
Silently into one another's eyes.
The golden light was drawn up from the earth,
The silver voices seem'd to faint away
And pass up thro' bright mountain-paths of cloud
Back into Heaven, and silence breathed instead,
Except the roseleaves rustling in the air,
And babbling of a fountain. Suddenly
I started wildly ; had it been a dream ?
No, there she stood in twilight, that seemed dark
After the glory ; so I saw her not,
Till my eyes open'd to the waning light.
'Twas but a moment, ah—'twas but a moment—
But in that moment I had deem'd her false,
Fear'd she had fled away, but she was there.
And now I heard her speak, now first I heard—
Her eyes had spoken in their radiance,

Her heart in its swift pulse, her beaming cheeks
And mute lips each its utterance—Oh ! but now
“ My own,” she cried, I answer’d her, “ My own !”
Again we spoke together in those tones
That trembling met in one another’s hearts,
As sun-smit undulations in midsea
Kiss, and are join’d at once in perfect peace—
“ Love, Love ! my own ! my only one ! Love ! Love !”

CRETE, NAXOS

ARIADNE

PART I

I

THE winds have fallen, and the blue-eyed Spring
Lifts up the misty curtains of the land ;
And all the valley to the wine-dark sea
Lies quivering in the morning light, and seems
A billowy ocean of green woods, and vines,
Olives, and fig trees pierced with cypress dark,
And cornfields, changing into harvest gold
With every hour. Soft shadows breathe adown
The purple slopes, and laughing lights return,
Fetching from out the hollows of the hills,
And gloomed glens, like sudden lightning-flash,
The glance of some swift stream, or torrent-fall,
Or the fair frontal of some snow-white fane.
The young vinedresser down the turf-walk comes,
Shaking his sheeny black locks in his mirth ;
The wildbirds quire of love amid the leaves,
And all things sing of merriment and morn.

I see a sweet-faced maiden, with blue eyes
And yellow hair ; or is she but a young
And widow'd bride ? Hard by the rippling sea
She sits on a smooth rock ; her looks are wan,
Altho' she sings ; anon she weeps, and wails,
And flings her tangled distaff on the sands,
Then turns to flee to the high hills. Again
She wanders back to her old seat, as one
Who has forgotten all the past, and hope
And memory strive within her day by day,
And night and morn ; and many a passer by
Looks on her kindly, as though her wild ways
Were an accustom'd sight. Sometimes she leaps
Down from her rocks, and clutches by the arm
Some fisher, and, with piteous eager looks,
Seems as she pray'd him, pointing far away
O'er the blue waters ; and he sees her thought,
And answers softly, rude man though he be,
And sometimes with a teardrop in his eye,
“ Oh yes, sweet lady, we have seen a sail.”
And she laughs sweetly ; for she dreams, she dreams
That he will turn again ; and well they know
All her sad musings, all her dear vain hopes,
And eke out her fond fancies with their own ;
So for a moment she be comforted.

II

Just such a morning had she in her mind,
A morn of other years, a sunny morn,

When sorrow hid not from her eyes the sun.
But, had the sun been hidden, joy had made
A brighter sun within her. These were days
When monarchs were but simple men, and drew
Their better life from Nature, fix'd their hopes
Upon the coming Springtime, and reposed
Their happy memories in the golden days
Of Summer and of Autumn ; and she thought
Of those brief blissful hours, when she had sung
Far other songs, and when her ditty ceased
She heard her brother answer her from far.
Of joy and life he in the vineyard sang,
And cropt the sprouting vines ; her mother span
In the cool portico beneath the shade ;
At times she smiled and murmur'd of those years
When love was something more than the old song,
That whiled away her aged hours, and youth
Fairer than in this old age of the world.
Her father drank the old wine of last year
And laugh'd unto himself : but, as a flower,
That 'twixt the sun and shadow shares its sweetness,
Hither and thither flitting in the wind,
Softly the blue-eyed Ariadne moved
Beneath the whispering poplars, sometimes seen,
And sometimes hid. Ah ! when she lifted up
Her loving face unto the clouds of morn,
That, from the purple of the oceanstream,
Rose like a triumph, her gold hair blown back
From brows as pure as the unfretted sand,

Laved by the last smooth sea, as tho' she hoped
That some lithe Mercury would stoop therefrom,
And kiss her on the lips ; her large blue eyes
Grew darker with the heaven drawn into them,
And seem'd to bid the little plumpy loves
Into their softer spheres. Then bending down
Her neck, whose grain was soft as lily leaves,
Eager she look'd along the level seas ;
For she had caught a little homeward sail
Between two myrtles blown apart, yet far,
Far off that silver sail : whereat she stoop'd
To peep among the flowers, that waved beneath
The dews of the old fountain by the way,
Nearer and nearer creeping towards the shore,
With glances, that between the darksome veils
Of her sweet eyes might almost feed the flowers
She gazed upon, and on her crimson lip
Arch pleasure, like a rosy bacchanal,
Lay dreaming of the world, and bliss to be.
She sees far off the slowly-moving sail.
Soon is the trysting-hour ; 'tis he who comes
For her, the warrior, whose great heart she won
By that one loving act of woman's art,
Which saved him once, and all his men of war
From death in youth. What if his eyes grew blind
To all her wondrous beauty, deaf his ears
To her young voice, whose natural accents seem
To drink for ever from the secret springs
Of melody ? can his true living heart

Forget his saviour, her to whom he owes
That all the promise of his regal race,
That the proud hopes of his heroic youth
Were not cast under the resistless fangs
Of the fell dragon? So she laughs, instead
Of any words, in answer to her thoughts;
And her eyes sparkle for a moment, like
The sunlit waters lightening thro' the leaves.

III

Shadows have fallen on the ancient home;
The day is ended. Where her mother span,
Under the portico amid the shade,
Her father drank the red wine of last year,
Her brother cropt the vines, is silence now
And darkness; nothing but the rustling leaves,
And bubbling of the fountain. Soon the moon
Arose, and with it the familiar chant
Of the dark nightingale, that never sang
Sad notes to her till now; but now they seem
A loud clear voice of fear, an oracle
Of woe, a piteous pleading, a strong spell
Of incantation to win back her soul.
She listens, and she stays with beating heart;
Her steps go back altho' she knows it not;
She only hears the voice she heard of old,
When first she learnt the music of love-words
Till death to be remember'd. Oh! what thoughts

Are hers in that strange interval, that holds
Her heart suspended betwixt love and love,
The old loves, and the new ! the love of friends,
The love of kinsfolk, and the inborn love
Of mother and of father ! Then she thinks
Of the sweet music of the tongues of praise ;
But do they tell her more than she hath seen,
When her own eyes have look'd upon herself
In her own mirror, or in the smooth sea ?
And then she runs along a bowery walk,
And enters by a little garden-gate,
And seeks the inner shadows of the house,
That she must leave before the morrow-morn
Shall rise upon the moonlight ; and she makes
A present picture of the things to be ;
Her aged mother weeps beneath the porch ;
Her father stands apart, and dimly smiles
To cheat her tears, and steady her weak heart,
Torn by her griefs like a stormbeaten flower.
And then the days of old come back to her,
As to one drowning, when the mystic lamp
Of Nature, flickering between life and death,
Flashes a momentary last farewell,
Lights up the secret chambers of the soul,
And shows us all therein. Old days appeared
As the far hills lit by the setting sun ;
Like sweet bells soaring on the billowy wind ;
And things she took slight note of every day
Show'd, like a picture, in the burning fancy

Fed by her sorrow : oh ! those beloved hills,
That old house with its treasures, those old trees,
The flower-plots, and the home fields newly mown,
Had never seem'd so magic-sweet as now. . .
She saw the chamber, whence, at break of day,
Her mother look'd out thro' the ancient vine ;
She saw the lamp beside her evening chair,
The jocund supper and the vesper song ;
She saw her young and fair, who now was old,
As when she follow'd her about the house,
Thro' galleries haunted by the ghosts of kings ;
And peep'd in dusty corners, in dim cells,
In hingeless coffers cramm'd with rusty wealth ;
Or when she pass'd, in breathless afternoons,
Into the orchards with their soft green walks ;
Their fresh, cold runnels fringed with mint and moss ;
Or marvell'd at the heavy hanging boughs,
Purple with fruits that dipp'd into the stream.
The long-forgotten hours awoke and lived
Like his first conscience to a guilty man
Borne out to die : but now the world was changed.
Their sweet of life was gone, their years to come
Were few, their joy of heart had pass'd to her,
And little more of hope was left to them,
And she should be their proper comforter,
And they must part ; her eyes grew dim, her heart
Had lost its motion ; ah ! the touch of death
Seem'd sweeter to her than that waking sense
That all the past, so dear, so full of music,

Must cease and come to silence. Shall she hide,
Or fly where he can never follow her,
Forget the almighty present in the past?
As tho' the moonshine, flittering on her brow,
Could warm it like the sunny shine of day;
As tho' the first kiss she can call to mind
Felt as the last, the golden seal from him.
She feels that pain would be a welcome thing,
By side of this forlorn and deathlike swoon,
Where all her vital passions slay each other
Like waves that meet together. "Ah!" she cries,
"Fain would I die this moment, if"—and hark!
The strength as of a giant sunders all
The links of adamant that lock'd her will
And purpose; 'tis his voice among the boughs
Between her and the sea; the love of friends,
The love of kinsfolk, and the inborn love
Of father and of mother: see! they stand,—
Who were not long ago as strong and fair
As armed giants, all unconquerable—
Now like pale phantoms of their former selves,
Thin ghosts that melt away as morning mists,
Wan stars that cannot front the glorious day.
That love that is the life of life hath shone
Into her soul; what can she do? Her tears
Are nought against it, more than are the drops
Of matin dew, that seem as little suns
Against the orb of noon: oh! 'tis his voice
Scattering her doubts, as 'twere a little dust

Shaken down by a trumpet blast ; 'tis he
Who mounts the shoreward stair ; and 'tis his head
That peers between the parted leaves and flowers,
And takes the sudden moonlight on his face.
He murmurs a few notes of an old song,
And whispers some low-voiced words ; and all,
Childhood, and girlhood, wonted hopes, and fears
Fade in oblivion, as the garden trees,
The flowers she loved the best, her little birds
That sang to her until this very day,
And the beloved home of all her days,
Drown in the shadow of that passing cloud.
She marks not that the moon is hid away ;
Her heart is radiant and she lights the dark.
But when its sheeny face looks down again,
It shows her, far below beneath a rock
O'er-plumed with rosebrier, the appointed bark,
And the strong men that only wait for her.
And, while she bides with beating heart, again
The nightingale unloosens the long chain
Of his melodious thoughts, showers on the dark
Rapturous joys, like arrows which their speed
Turns into fire ; no more she is afraid
To listen to that song, which seems a voice
Of godlike victory o'er a thousand ills,
Chiding her feeble sad humanity.
The rising breeze is singing in her hair ;
It seems to wing her heart, and she is free
To fly with him, to fly—she hath no fear !

IV

All night the bark held on beneath the moon ;
And airs, that only breathed upon the sea
Lovesighs, and only drew soft answers from it,
That trembled back a subtle sympathy,
A soundless ripple, kissing the dark side
O'er which she leant, and heard at intervals
The silvery waters chiming, while the wake
Of the light vessel quiver'd like a flame
In the warm moonlight, vanishing away
Thro' darkest shadows toward her island home,
Whose distant mountain summits seem'd to frown
A silent warning on her silent fears,
Which that beloved voice close by her ear
Scarce charm'd away. Sometimes they join in song,
Which the deep voices of the men of war
Lifted on pealing chorus, as the swell
Of the dark waters lift on high the crests
Of the bright spray, when winds are blowing strong.
Sometimes he moved her mirth with mirthful words,
And she laugh'd out ; sometimes he held her ear
Wound in the meshes of a wondrous tale
Wherein he was chief venturer ; and his words
Became to her as vital forms, and shook
Her pitying soul, as tho' she had been by :
And the dim waters, and the midnight still
Seem'd but as phantoms, after the dread sight
Of mortal peril, for a moment shaped

In his swift speech, and hardly pass'd away
When his blithe laugh, and yet another song
Brought back the present. Soon her swooning sense
Grew blind to all things outward, and she heard
No utterance but her own tumultuous thoughts,
That rose before her in disastrous shapes.
It was no more her lover's dusky brows
Leaning toward her, nor the silver sound
Of the seawaters, mingling with his words.
She sat in her old chamber, and the breeze
Stirr'd the large flowers, that with her lattice twined ;
Below there lay the gardens, dark and still,
The fountain-waters hidden in the gloom ;
But in the middle of the chamber stood
Her own dear mother weeping, and the tears
Dropt in the moonlit silence ; and she rose
And came nigh to her, look'd into her face,
And dreamt she threw fond arms about her neck.
But in that mourning aspect show'd no sign
Of knowledge ; was it madness, was it pride ?
Or was it blinded by too many tears ?
Or was she then for ever unforgiven ?
She knew not, but her sorrow was as death.
Her vision changed ; she thought she stood again
Under the broad leaves of the murmuring vine
That curtain'd them, and heard her father speak
The last words she had heard him utter there.
Had not her father said, one merry morn
Of Spring, one May-day morn, while holding her

At arm's length from him, to look on her face,
That virgin beauty fairer than all blooms
Breathing around them there ; had he not said :
" Kiss me, my child ; whom, if mine eyes grew dark
After this moment, I should ever see
Pictured upon my heart, a light, a star
To lighten me till death ? I tell thee, child,
Dearest, and only one, our hope, and joy,
The day is come for thee to be the joy
Of yet another, and to lean thy youth
On some young heart, and to untwine thine arms
From ours, the old ones ; tho' the old ones still
Must follow thee with their dim eyes, so far
As they may follow. Let it not be far,
O my beloved : if thou take a mate,
Choose him among the chiefs of this thy land,
The noblest, and the best ; is not this isle
The first of all the daughters of the deep ?
Wilt thou find any lovelier, or a race
For valour and for wisdom more renown'd ?
I know not any. Should some prince from far
Ask me to give thee to him for his mate,
Could I, could thy fond mother, who have mark'd
Thine eyes first open to the light, and heard
Thy first words lisp, and seen thy little feet
Bring thee up to our arms ; could we, dear girl,
See thee go from us over unknown seas,
And be divided by them from thy land
And lineage, haply never hearing more ,

Of thee, or from thee ; thee no more of us,
Whose closing eyes will hope to look on thee,
And thy young children : and, if we were blind,
To clasp them in our arms, and thus to feel,
That if all else that men love in this world
Were taken from us, strength, and wealth, and power,
We should not be forsaken ? Heaven forbid
That I should see thee part, and linger on
Under a cloud of ever-during grief,
A king of men to other's eyes, a man
Unto himself whose heart is turned to stone,
Cold, cold, and dead, as this bright isle would be
Without its sun. Ah ! rather strike us dead,
Than leave us to lament thee, dead to all
Thy cherish'd first affections and to us !
So choose thy mate among us " : and a tear
Stood in his eye. And then he laugh'd, and said,
" But I am as a child myself, to dream
Of what can never be. I know not what
Has sway'd me this glad morn to utter words,
As harsh and dissonant from thy young mirth,
As would be a grim cloud of winter snow
Athwart this golden summer : kiss me, child."
She cried aloud ; and with that cry awoke ;
The marvel was dissolved, and half the pain.
She could not be where she was not ; her home
Was on the land, and she was on the sea.
But the unreal was so real still,
That undreamt tears were falling ; but the day

Was dawning, and far other sights and sounds
Were round about her ; for the coming morn
Was darker than the moonlight. From the west
Uprose huge shapes, as of avenging gods,
That follow'd swiftly with a thunderous voice,
That mingled with the winds, and drove the foam
Against the sail, and shuddering hull, that rose,
As 'twere to front the tempest, and again
Rush'd madly on against a mountain-wall
Of waters ; so she veil'd her face in fear,
And trembled, for she deem'd that all was lost.
The loves that had been, with the joy to be,
Would vanish in a moment ; every hope
And memory, drown'd in terror, ere death came
To swathe her warm life in the cold salt surge.
But a hand touch'd her, and a voice was heard
That drove sad fancies from her, as the breeze
Of morning scatters the pale ghosts of night.
His strong arm round her, she arose, and saw
Another land, a land of corn and wine,
A land of hill and valley, laughing out
Thro' rents in the pale stormdrift, and she mark'd
That they were borne into a quiet bay,
Circled by fair green woods, and pastoral dales ;
And the dread sound of the great wrath had ceased
Tho' far behind them roll'd its voice in vain.

PART II

I

OH let not woman read the faith of man
In light of her own love ; or dream the fire,
That leaps up in his heart, will burn as long
As that more steadfast and enduring flame,
That, waxing gently, grows to more and more,
As the dawn waxing to the noon of day ;
While his from its first ardour dies away,
As the sun waning to the west at even
To less and less. She feeds her thirsty soul
With his burnt-offering only, and delights
To trample underfoot all flowers of life,
Tho' lavish'd on her by a thousand hands,
Only as wither'd leaves : oh ! her pure gold,
Tho' light in seeming, will outweigh full soon
His gilded baser metal of self-love,
Of self-deceiving, of smooth flatteries ;
Ev'n passion's self, tho' for a moment made
To sink the scale. Yet, while it is her heaven
To reign sole Goddess of his prostrate soul,
Still more she loves to leave that throne, to bow
Before him, and to minister to him,
Sole priestess, casting on the altar fire
All joys, all hopes that she hath ever known,
All past and future, all her selfhood, all

For love of him, and for his love. But he
Is as the fire upon a mountain-top,
Beaten by veering winds, that whirl it round
Hither and thither ; and the pleasant plots,
Gardens and vineyards, that rejoiced erewhile
Under its shelter, suddenly are swept
By the fire-torrent ; for his fickle loves
Change as those winds, each stormy in its change ;
While hers is constant as an ebbless sea.

II

But, if the corselet of a warrior shields
His heart's blood from the javelin's point—in vain
He seeks to hide the thoughts within that heart
From woman's eye. Ev'n as the light will sound
The darkest waters, her diviner fire
Of indivisible, all-searching love
Will find it, ev'n though hidden from itself ;
Will read the shadows cast from it, where'er
That heart is not transparent to its beams.
And she will mark the secret in a smile
Colder than heretofore ; will echo a tone
Too faint for other's ears ; will hear a sigh,
And question it ; or fear a flash of mirth
Not due to the occasion : she will feel,
Like one atrembling between life and death,
The passing of a shadow, or cool wind,
After the warm sun any sudden change,

And on the tablets of her spotless peace
Will read the sum of all. And he will stand
In wonderment, when after many days
Her wisdom, like an oracle, unfolds
The purpose, or the passion he believed
The whole world knew no more, nor wisest men,
Than she that simple child. And so it chanced
That her sweet words fell on his ear in vain ;
Her laughter were not mirror'd in his eyes ;
Her simple wonder stirr'd him not ; she felt
As though her footstep, feeling for the ground,
Shock'd her with a harsh void, and she was sad.
Oft, when his joy in her was fresh and pure,
He loved to waken up her thirsty soul
To the great wondrous world—by night or day
Wondrous—and breathed in her delighted ear
The mystic motions of his inmost soul,
Wandering beyond its confines ; call'd her oft,
Ere daybreak, to behold the solemn dawn
Flood o'er the mountain-tops, and woodlands dark,
When all was stillness, so profound they heard
Their heart-beats ; and from far the argent chime
Of falling waters, and the first blithe note
Of songbird waking, swiftly to become
A tuneful sea, ere yet the sun roll'd o'er
The purple summits, and led on the winds,
That sway'd the billowy forest, touch'd with gold
Of sunrise, and bore up its dewy breath
Of odours, and deep, distant organ voice.

Oft, when the nightly winds had made the sea
Put on his might, she joy'd at morn with him
To mark the loud tormented waters rage
Against the adamantine steeps, and writhe
'Mid fallen crags, and caves, and, with the weight
Of their vast wrath, shake all the isle. She thought
She saw the powers, that rule beneath the sea,
Moving amid the thunder and the foam,
And wielding their great arms ; until the glory,
And hundred voices of the ocean fill'd
Her ear, as with the music of a triumph,
Her heart with exultation ; and she turn'd
Her eager eyes on him to answer her
With gladness like her own. But now his eyes
Seem'd with that visible majesty unmoved,
And inly turn'd on that she could not scan.
And she grew thoughtful too, and could have wept,
That, when her heart was sunny as the morn,
His should be cold in shadow ; but alas !
Had she then dreamt of sorrow such as hers,
First by those maned monsters of the deep
He should have seen her torn, and after thrown
Pale at his feet amid the murmuring spray
On the smooth sunlit sands ; and when he saw
The golden morning, that awakes the hearts,
And wins the smile of all things beautiful,
The dewy morning light upon her face,
That used to turn its first looks toward him,
Fix'd in the hush'd cold undelight of death ;

Ah ! then perchance her solitary ghost
Had witness'd some few sighs, some tender words,
Ere he spread forth his wings to flee away,
And in her woe she had been comforted.
He would have bended over her his eyes
For the last time, and in her sunken orbs
Have urn'd his tears ; her hopes had been but tears !

III

At last her fancy show'd him his own guile.
He heard her weeping in an evil dream,
And touch'd her with his hand, and she awoke ;
(It was a gusty time, about the dawn.)
She said still weeping, " Strange it is that sleep,
With its dim likeness of reality
And idle shapes, hath power to move my soul
With grief, which thou and daylight, in whose smile
Ill phantoms fade away, cannot control.
Thou hearest how this fresh and breezy morn
The sea is stirring, and the waves beat loud
Upon the beach : this night there hath been wind,
Whose rising, with the rising of the sea,
Seem'd in my sleep like fatal voices calling
Louder and louder, Ariadne, come,
Wake, Ariadne, for thy spouse is fled,
Thy warrior is afar upon the sea.
So, as I was, my eyes bedimm'd with sleep
And thronging tears, methought I rose from bed,

Where thou wert not, and rush'd into the storm
And flying spray ; forlorn, as one pursued
By the Eumenides ; for I was mad,
And heeded not myself. And, lo, a crowd
Of hungry fishers, wild men of the sea,
Whose savage breasts with pity seem'd to heave
For my distress ; and some did scatter tears
Amid the salt sleet of the seas, and beat
Their rugged bosoms with sincerity ;
And all, with outstretcht arms, and eager looks,
Made signs that still thy sail was dimly seen
Under the lee of a dark mountain isle.
Alas ! alas ! I look'd, but only saw,
In the drear twilight of that cruel morn,
The towering waters ridge the gleaming East,
As the shrill northwind crisp'd the gloomy seas
With wreathen spume ; so that, in my despair,
My long, loose hair streaming upon the breeze
With head uncover'd, with unsandall'd feet,
I ran along the vineyards in wild haste,
That I might reach the highest craggy peak
Of all the isle, and then perchance behold
The last of him who had forsaken me.
I wildly thought to look upon thy face
Once more, and kill thee with the sight of mine :
And make thee hear, as from the towers of Heaven,
The lightning-winged notes of my revenge,
Of my great sorrow, anger, and despair :
Then, if that fail'd, I would have sued thee thus

With supplication low, and folded palms.
I well remember that pale Autumn morn,
And the rough winds had just begun to whirl
The dying roses up into the air,
And the long tendrils of the drooping vines
Were scattering off their red and golden leaves
Along the stony ways. I wept aloud ;
For Nature seem'd my fortunes to bewail
With that old Autumn song, and tear her hair
And cast her Summer chaplets to the ground,
To see me thus ; ah ! drear and desolate hour.
The winds rush'd by me, shrieking as they flew,
Like spirits frantic with their pain ; and then
Into low wailing fell among the rocks.
And in the pauses of the inland storm,
I heard the voice of the unmerciful ;
I heard the orphan, and the widow-maker
Speak to me in the thunder of the seas.
And then again it seem'd a mourning voice,
Awful, as was my sorrow, but withal
Compassionate, and like a mother's kind,
A friendly, old, and sweet monotony.
But oh ! 'tis past ; may all the Gods be thank'd
That dreams are only dreams ; it is not true
That thou hast left me, Theseus. O my love,
It is not true that thou wilt leave me thus."
So saying, she look'd sadly in his face.
He said—"I am the firstborn of a King ;
Wert thou a poor man's child, yet be thou sure

I love thee more than royal damsels clad
In Tyrian folds, and zoned with pearls of Ind."

But while he spoke, she saw perplexed thoughts
A moment pass across his face, then sink
Into his soul ; as on a summer's night
Strange lightnings spring from out the tempest's skirts
And deep into the central thundercloud
Strike, and are lost, but never reach the earth.

Alas ! alas ! her soul divined too well
What she had never dared confess to it.

Under those blue eyes, looking clear as Truth,
The motions of his heart were false and cold
As is the sunlight underneath the sea,
That looks so fair, and trembles on the sands.

Ah ! then she twined her arms about his neck,
And with the long locks of her cloudy hair
Wiped away tears, but they were tears of joy,
And sweet as dews shed out of morning flowers.

And all that day she wander'd by herself,
And spoke not even to him ; it was delight
That made her lonely ; in great bliss she loved
To be alone, as she was now in grief ;

And to the clouds, the mountain-trees, and springs
To tell of that she loved, and him she loved
Now more than heretofore ; for he had said
That he loved her, albeit a King's son,
Were she a poor man's daughter, not a king's.

Ev'n then she knew how hard it is to part,
When hearts have beat together in one sleep,

And in that sleep have dreamt the selfsame dream.
Once in their sleep they dreamt the selfsame dream,
And woke at once thinking each other slain.
Once, on a moonlight night, she waking look'd
Upon his face so beautiful in sleep,
And heard him murmur in the muffled voice
Of strengthless sleep : "For ever she is mine !
Away and leave me, Death is not so fierce
As ye are, hated executioners,
Who part us twain, whose hearts are firmlier knit
Than one to itself. Death is not so alone ;
Ah ! bloodless Death is not so desolate
As Love that seeketh Love and cannot find."
And then his breast with inward torment stirr'd,
His fingers feebly moved, as if to strive
With some that bound him ; and she kiss'd his brow,
Whereon the sweat of mortal conflict stood,
As though it had been real ; for those words,
Breathed thus, did seem the very seal of truth.
But he raised up the side that held his heart,
And, turning on the other, with deep sighs
Sank into sleep again, and dreamless calm.

IV

So all she had foreshadow'd in her sleep
Came to her, even as she had pictured it.
One morning he was missing from her side.
She ran down to the shore, forlorn and pale ;

She heard the pitiful words of fishermen ;
Against the distant purple isle she saw
The far-off bark ; she ran to the hilltop
To see it while she could ; and from that day
Her spirit, darken'd by its real woe,
Took fragments of imperfect memories
For things to come ; as the uncertain sight
By moonlight takes the images of life
For living forms ; all pity sued in vain.
Her sighs, like smoke from burning mountains driven,
Rose from her heart of anguish night and day.
Her lamentation, like the lonely waves,
When the first tempest of her woe was past,
A ceaseless murmur made : a pale old man
Who once had lived amid the strife of men,
Said that it was ambition : " How couldst thou,
Poor child, subdue ambition ? " And he smiled
A palsied smile, that wither'd into grief,
Because she answer'd, " Tell me where he is ;
Oh let me meet mine enemy, and I'll plead
For my lost love that he hath stolen away,
Upon my bended knees ! " And then she blush'd
At her own foolish words, and spoke again
In bitter truth ; " Oh that the hateful thing,
The cruel passion, could transform itself
Into a very serpent in its wrath,
Or the slain Minotaur return'd to life ;
Into whose dark den I might pass alone
To strive with it ! " 'Twas best for her to part,

When all things fought against her in this world.
She saw no more one face of all she loved.
The hero present to her eyes and ears,
The lord of all her thoughts was now no more,
Only a bloodless phantom, not less dear,
Tho' she no more might clasp it in her arms,
More than forsaken Orpheus his foregone
Eurydice, across the nether stream ;
Only a lifeless thing, a silent shape ;
And yet not silent ; for it utter'd all
That he had ever spoken in her ear
In their love moments, in their prime of bliss,
Like songs of sweet birds in the Mayday dawn,
Whisperingly, but no other words.
How many of such words were promises,
Were blessings !—she remember'd that too well—
And now came back to her, like sounds in sleep,
Like voices cast away upon the wind,
Like mocking echoes when the sound is gone ;
And 'twixt those hours and these there was a gulph,
Whence angry furies flung their arms and howl'd !
The very day was dark ; but, ere she died,
She felt a sudden rapture, kin to hope ;
And, for a brief space, all the dread to come,
And all her dearest memories,—which begat
Between them her dark brood of present thoughts—
Vanish'd in mere forgetfulness ; for see,
Two loving eyes look'd up into her own !
And then she pray'd for life, that it might live,

Oblivion—so she might but think on it—
Pain—that she might bear pain, so it were free—
For sorrow, if it might rejoice ; for strength
To fight against herself ; so that it grew
· To bring back to her widow'd eyes again
The presence she had lost ; perchance to his,
Who would come back—oh ! sure he would come
back—

And, if she were not there to welcome him,
Look on her in her child. So memory twined
Into its ghostly garland one live flower
Of hope, that promised a new life ; but Fate
Stood by and frown'd ; and ever-armed Death,
Following the flying shadow of her sorrow,
Cast down his own upon her as she smiled.

V

But, ere she died, she saw a wondrous sight,
Or dreamt she saw. She raised her swooning head,
And for a while the glory in her eyes
Kindled again, the red rose in her cheek.
Her tongue was loosed ; “ O friends, bewail me not,
Behold, I know that I am not forsaken.
I thought my love was false, and that he fled
Beyond the seas, and left me in a land
Of strangers ; but this morn I wander'd forth.
There is a spot, among the mountains wild
In my beloved isle, untrodden, green,

Whereto ye came, after a long ascent,
Thro' jungles, and huge rocks, and dangerous waters
Breaking around ye like a sundering world,
But one short curve, unhoped-for, took ye forth
Out of that chaos ; and, O Heaven ! a sight
Of beauty broke upon ye in a moment,
Glad as the face of a Divinity,
Or Peace herself, showing her blessed face
Amid the noise of battle. I have seen
Rude voyagers shed irresistible tears
At that bright apparition, and a shout . . .
Of exultation, bursting from their hearts,
Hath scaled the peaked hills around, and made
The solitary Nymphs of that sweet place
Fly into trackless paths, and deepest shade.
So lovely was the view beheld on high
Of that green land, its winding streams, soft hills,
Plumed with their forest trees ; no roofs of men, .
Sparkling from out their vineyards ; no tall towers
Of palaces, arising out of woods
And gardens green ; no rustic smoke ascending
From the near hut, no cities seen afar.
Only the silence of the champaign broad
Throbbing with light ; all dying into thin
Azure of morning, with the circling sea
Shining afar off like a crystal wall.
Methought I stood upon that glorious plain ;
And, as I look'd upon the lovely realm,
I heard a sudden tumult, and behold

From under green boughs link'd with eglatere,
And bloombells, came forth, with a sound of songs
And beaten cymbals, a great company,
Such as were never seen in this dim world.
And youths and maidens, beautiful as they
Who trod the young earth in the youth of Time,
Swinging between them many a wildflower chain,
And woodbine, sparkling with their dewy drops,
Came onward in quick dance. Others there were,
Farther than eyesight, following in the mists
Of dawn, as tho' the old earth had begun
To be repeopled with a fairer race
Than mortal man, once more. I stood apart,
And, in my wonder, I forgot my grief.
Some shouted jubilant, and flung their arms
Into the air, and toss'd a red-rose rain
Amid the torrent sunrise ; others blew
Trumpets, and smote on timbrels ; and, between
The nearer voices, far cries from the deep
Of pathless valleys and dark woods, uproll'd,
Like some great sea, whose waves were blown by hope
To never-ebbing, still exulting joys.
They came, they came, they cover'd all the mount.
And, in the midst of all that pomp, I saw
One, as enthroned, who in a chariot sat ;
And speckled pards, as swift and bright as fire,
Drew him along, and in his hand he bore
A rod o'ergrown with viny sprays, his brow
Wreathed with the ruby grapes like clustering gems.

And his deep eye look'd on me, and I forgot
All sorrow, and the love that I had lost.
Was it my lost love from among the Gods
Come back to call me? Oh full well I know
My love hath not forsaken me; I know
He could no more embrace me here on earth,
If glorious death hath wing'd him up to them:
But I shall find him. As I bow'd my head,
The joyous host stood still, the songs were hush'd.
He rose, advanced a step, as if to light
Down from his car, and with delighted eyes
Stretch'd out his arms unto me!" Here she ceased.
But her eyes burn'd, as though again she saw
The vision on the mount; then, as the star
Of even drowns amid the dews of dawn,
The rapturous light was quench'd, and the grey cloud
Breathed o'er her mortal beauty; and she lay
Free of all sorrow, while her orphan child
Lay wondering at the world that she had left.

VI

Oh! oft the Gods bring near to us in time
The chastisement of pride, make our vain wills
Rebound upon us; fragments wounding us
Of the sword broken in our hands, the pain
Of the burnt hand we thrust into the fire,
We deem their vengeance. Ofttimes, when too late,
Awake the yearnings of the heart in vain

For that we have thrown by in thriftless haste,
And never look on more : pure gold of peace
Lost for gilt folly ; worth for wreaths of praise ;
True hearts for heartless flattery ; love itself
For love of self. And so it was with him,
The man of wars and wiles, and weary ways,
Darken'd by sun, and dust, and battlefields,
Whose kingly stature spoke of knitted strength,
Of perfect manhood, his broad brows of thought ;
In whose dusk aspect the maymorn of youth
Was quench'd, but not the starlight in his eyes,
As he stood underneath a well-known rock,
Where he had paced in early days with her,
Who had long years been nothing more to him,
Than some sweet summerdawn, to one who strives
Against the roaring of the winter winds,
And midnight snowblasts. Two or three were there,
Fellows in his ill fortune ; for his bark
Lay on the shoals a wreck, and they were hush'd
In weary slumbers, and the wind alone
Howl'd in the caverns, and bent back the boughs
Of a leafless tree, fit emblem of his fate,
And desolation ; but the tree was there
In its own land while he was far away.
Oh once that well-known isle had seem'd his home ;
Now was it all forlorn as his own heart,
Lash'd by the stormy wind, and the salt spray.
There had he walk'd, beneath the summer sun,
In those remember'd hours, which in his heart

Whirl'd swiftly, like the dead leaves at his feet.
But in a moment all the lovely past,
Behind the mists of tumult and of change,
Dim as a pictured unreality,
Rose up before him, and the years between
Show'd like the smoke of tempest rolling off.
He whisper'd, "Have the Rulers of the world
Cast me again upon this peaceful shore,
That I may link again the broken chain
Of happy thoughts, and find the blissful rest
I rent asunder? Oh! I know this place,
And all the fashions of that pleasant home,
Which seldom, since the morn I fled away
Rebellious, had I for a moment's space
Leisure to muse on, save in dreams. I know
The rocky bypath, winding from the beach,
O'erhung with its brier-roses, till it join'd
The viny walk we loved to pace at morn,
Before the sudden sun came up the east,
And smote the cool turf with its trembling beams,
Kindling the argent dews to gold, and changed
The stainless waters in their lilycups
To ruddy wine. I see the osier gate
Parting the trellised alley, hung with green,
And purple bunches from the flowers that waved
Before the door thrown open, and behind
Dark bowery slopes, tipt here and there with flames
Of sunrise, and, above, the jagged peaks
Of purple hills. We heard the hidden flow

Of a clear runnel, rushing to the sea
Down through a tangled valley to the left ;
Hark ! even now I hear the sound of it,
Swollen with angry floods, as though it raved
And moan'd with grief ; ah ! 'tis the surer sign.
The Immortal ones, I fear, but mock me now,
By holding up to my reawaken'd eyes
The picture of that fairest lot on earth,
Love undisturb'd, when I can clasp no more
Aught but an image of it—as one sees
The youthful shape, that is no longer his,
And nevermore can be—A thing that was,
A presence, like the cloudless sun of morn
Remember'd when the thunderclouds at even
Have swathed it round ; a thing that is to be
Flickering before my vision till I die,
As the sun's image in the eye, to one
Who hath gazed on it shining in its strength ;
Beauty and Truth a living form, and lost,
And nevermore to answer to my call,
Or tremble to my touch ! But, oh ! I feel
The magic of this place is over me,
As though a wizard's hand had touch'd mine eyes,
And bid me slumber, deaf to every voice
But hers. Ah ! if she stood before me now,
As last I saw her, once again my heart
Would clothe itself in blisses, and forget
All but its first enchantment ; once again
Glide down the unruffled future that I loved

To babble of as idly as a child,
Ere yet the fires of glory that I fed
Lay, like dead ashes, underneath my feet.
O God ! if she be dead, and I be doom'd
To hear the winds and waters, that of old
Spoke to us musically, cry unto me
In lamentation, 'Thou hast slain her ! Thou
Hast hated the one heart that loved thee best !
Hast slain thy loved and lovely one !' And yet
Love is not kill'd, nor hers, nor mine. Alas !
For mortal man and his humanity ;
What can heal woful life, but only death ?
Were not death better than to think of it ?
If she be dead shall I not follow her ?
Or is this madness ? What is madness more ?"

VII

They show'd him where she slept, and heard no more
Her own voice mourning, nor the moaning seas
That plain'd in answer to her. There she lay,
Nigh where she look'd forth daily with dim eyes,
Yearning to see once more the sail she saw
From her home garden on the Cretan shore.
He stood beside her lone tomb ; and then all
The lovely hours, which troublous years between
Had hidden from him, rose up from her dust
And pass'd before him ; came back, as a face,
Hid in a clouded mirror, reappears

Slowly ; the stormy interval of cares,
And pains, of fearful strivings, of delights
Snatch'd out of terrors—as when a strong man
Stands after victory with quivering limbs
And panting breath—seem'd vain to him, all vain,
Beside that crown of Time, that hour of love ;
Love, when twin hearts are swiftly link'd in one
By sympathies as subtle as the air,
Yet strong as are atoms of adamant,
Fed by the beams of beauty, as the air
By the Spring sunlight. Now indeed he knew
That if he stood upon the topmost height
Of all the ages ; look'd down, as a God,
On all the treasures of a vanquish'd world ;
The triumphs, and the treasures, and the breath
Of adoration, and a life, prolong'd
Thro' countless generations, would be less
Against the few fleet moments of those joys
Given and taken by two mortal souls !
And for the selfsame blisses he would change
The whole world, were it his ; and where were they ?
Fled, as it were the sun from out the face
Of Nature, and for ever, leaving nought
But memory, as cold moonlight, lighting up
A frozen world, sad symbol of his soul.
But, as he mused and mourn'd, he thought again ;
But could love die, more than the sunken sun
That rises on the morrow ? Would her soul,
Whose glory, radiant through her loving face

Was to his daily life as that same sun,
Have yet a better rising? "O ye Gods,
Whose power may compass all things, grant me this.
Were not such prayers mere folly, I would crave
That the dear image, flitting thro' my thoughts,
Might pass before my eyesight once a day;
And the faint words my spirit seems to hear
Might stir my sense, and soothe my widowhood,
Which thus might not be inconsolable.
And I might hope while looking on that shade,
That she was living still somewhere apart,
Afar, and feeding her forsaken lot,
As I, with fond revivals of the past,
And standing wistful on some twilight shore,
Dreaming of me alone, as I of her,
Until the hour when she shall see my sail
Bear down again upon her lonely isle,
And mutual welcomes shall awake again
The sever'd being to one endless life!
O love, love, blessed shade, if thou canst hear
From that far world where now thou art, I know not;
But this I know, because I feel, if love
Be life indeed, thou livest; if I love
I shall not die; thy love, too hungry flame,
Laid waste the lovely palace of thy soul,
And set that free to wander where it will,
Which men call death. But oftentimes have I thought
In nightly watches, while encamped foes
Hoped for the dawn, ev'n while the javelins rang

Against my shield and helm, if I be slain,
Shall all the motions that within me stir,
Cease with the pulsing heart, and burning eye ?
If words I utter with this voice be borne
Far down the listening ranks, from ear to ear,
From heart to heart, perchance from age to age ;
So that, when I am seen no more, the tongue
That utter'd them shall seem to speak again
With kingly accents of command, and shape
A passing shadow of the thing I am ;
If the high prophet, if the poet speaks,
When scarce a little dust is all of him
That we call life on earth ; shall that, which spake
Thro' tongues like these, and through all words and
deeds
Of kings and chiefs, and mighty men of mind,
Be blown asunder like the shock of dust
That is their mortal monument ? And yet
Their thoughts and utterance fill the world with power ;
The deeds they did sow other deeds ; and still
The cities that they builded, and the homes
That shelter'd them, are proof against the winds
Of countless winters : but they are not ! Shall
The fountains dry up while the rivers run ?
Was it not love—love, life itself—that spurr'd
The spirits of great men, and made them strive
For victory over Time ? Was it not love,
The love of honour, wealth, or power, still love ;
The love to be remember'd after death ;

The better love of country, and of kin ;
And that best love, the love of Good, for Good's
Unguerdon'd self, the love of Truth for Truth's ?
So love itself was captain to them all.
Ev'n hate is but love's shadow, the cold gloom
Where heat and light are not ; and if hate burns
Like fire, so will ice where fire is not.
So love is life itself, as is the sun
To this great world ; and shall the sun I see
Burn on for ever, and that sun within us,
That makes the sun we look on but a sign,
Cease and be nothing, nothing evermore ?
Ah me, what do I say ! 'Tis vain, 'tis vain
To call on phantasy to fill the void
In the waste heart, and longing eyes ; 'tis vain
To hope the future may redeem the past,
When nought is known of that which is to be,
If there be aught ; vain as the fleeting shapes
The eye may conjure from the formless blackness
Of midnight ; thy lost face among the rest,
That flies from me ev'n as I picture it :
While thou wert near me in the days of old,
And often as I would I look'd upon thee,
And ever saw that sweetness, that remains
To feed my sorrow, as the odours thrown
Upon a funeral pyre. Once on a time
Long since I heard an old man, good and wise,
Utter deep things that I remember still.
Ofttimes at Athens, when the day was done,

He came forth by the riverside, to breathe
The freshness of the twilight. I was young,
Fearless of this world, reckless of another ;
And so—as those who have no fear at all—
I dared to question him of fearful things.
His years were nigh a hundred, and his heart
Barren of hopes, as a bare mountain-peak,
In this life, or of aught beyond ; his eye
Was calm and cloudless ; and he said to me,
'O boy, I care not if I answer thee.
Youth heeds not his mortality ; his life
Is so delightsome it defies the thought
That it is not immortal ; if he were
One of my years, who came to question me,
I might be silent, lest I should awake
The fears I feel not ; but I know thou art
Too sunny-soul'd to cast a shadow down
So far beyond the present. Time, my son,
Is our great teacher, and he shows us this,
That, as his swift years follow on each other,
So all that is begotten of those years
Falls, and is follow'd by its proper heir.
Behold the long life of the forest tree,
An acorn, giant oak, and hollow trunk ;
Behold the short life of a single leaf,
Pale green, then dark at length, and sere at last :
So 'tis with man. For the babe knows not aught,
And thoughts and feelings strengthen with his strength,
And the old man hath well forgotten all :

But forests fall and other forests rise,
And when those die the other forests live.
So men are the inheritors of men,
Their forms and aspects with their thoughts and powers ;
So life is everlasting even on earth
To men, as leaves ; and, if it were not so,
Oh doth not one man's life outlive the years
Of all the forests since the earth was green ?
For if my spirit put forth thoughts for leaves,
And each year's thoughts are but as fallen ones,
While others come with every coming spring,
And hopes that waned give place to other hopes ;
Why should I scorn my threescore years and ten,
While forests count their thousands, if I live
More than their whole millenniums in one day ?'
Yet one last answer comes up from my heart.
The life of the most lovely flower on earth,
The inmost spirit of the richest rose
Breathes from it neither hope, nor yet despair ;
And, while I know that, I have felt them both,
And still feel that one love whence both are born.
And, should I live beyond all life of man,
And fall at last, a hundred-aged oak,
The breath, that goes forth from my dying lips,
Will bear on it the deathless thought, I love.
Even despair shall lead me back to hope,
And I will weep no more : if love, if love
Be life indeed, thou livest ; if I love,
As evermore I must, I shall not die !"

VIII

He stood awhile, and covered up his face,
To shut out the vain world, as though its light
Were darkness, while the inner glory shone
Of all he had lost. And, when he raised his head,
Suddenly he saw a little child
Weeping ; "O boy, what seekest thou ?" he said.
"Mother, my mother !" through his sighs and tears
He murmur'd, "for they laid her here, and shall
I see her never ? since this day I know
That she I named as such is not my mother.
This morn she spurn'd me forth, and said with scorn,
'Go seek thy kin,' but I have none, none, none.
I never saw my father, and, oh me,
Mother is dead, and one who knew her said,
'Come with me, I will bring thee to thy mother.'
He led me silently to this lone spot ;
Then left me, signing to me 'She is there !'
Yes, surely she is there !" And then he laid
His brow against the marble monument.
And then the warrior saw it was his son,
And wonder'd at himself, and then at him
The little one ; and stretch'd his arms, and cried,
"Ah ! then, I see they lost thee here, my child,
That I might find thee "; and caught him to his heart,
And held him there awhile, as one might hold
A treasure dug up from a fallen house.
And then look'd on him with such eager love—

Keeping him at arm's length—as though his eyes
Would never wink again, until he saw
All the fair mother wake up in the child.
And then he clasp'd him to his heart again,
That he might muse on all that he had seen :
For he had seen another marvel now.
Had he not dreamt but now of that rare life,
Love perfect, harmony, one heart in two,
So that twin aspects borrowing, each from each,
A daily light that mingles with its own,
Are changed into the likeness of each other ?
And here was one, a wondrous form and new,
That in one countenance had pictured two,
And therewithal a beauty of its own.
Looking on him he mused of what he was
In the same years ; and, as he look'd, he felt
The motions and the changes of that face
Revive within him lovely phantasies,
And feelings, even to the mystic dawn
Of being, when familiar things are strange,
And sow immortal memories in the soul.
Looking at him he saw what she had been.
The real image cast a living light
Upon the cherish'd tablets in his heart,
And that heart pulsed with a fresh life again.
All was not lost while the young boy was there,
But something won to live for in this world.
His sorrow changed into a tender joy,
As when grey clouds lift after set of sun,

And cast a glimmer on the weeping earth.
So they two left the mourning place together ;
And he, who came up with despair, went back
Leading his heir, like lorn hope, by the hand.

HESPERIDES

HESPERIA

I

SHE sat at noonday in her tent of flowers,
Her cheek leant on her hand ; and, tho' the sight
Of the Spring beauty of her paradise
Each morning brought fresh brightness to her eyes,
Fresh gladness to her heart, this happy morn
She saw not aught of all she loved the most.
And the bent brows and introverted eyes
Show'd that unwelcome and unwonted thoughts
Made blind and deaf her senses, while the soul
Wander'd in a day-dream of troublous moods.
A little fountain bubbled like sweet bells
Into a conch hard by ; the fearless birds,
Who knew her motions and obey'd her voice,
Flutter'd the rose-briers and acanthus leaves,
And whirr'd their wings within them : but the sound
Awaken'd not the dreamer ; silently
A veil of silver clouds was rent in twain,

And lavish stars, like Danae's golden shower,
Flecked the far blue seas between the hills ;
And yet no dazzle wink'd her sightless eyes.
And down the high slopes of the mountains flow'd
Shadow on shadow softly, as tho' they strove
Against the midday splendours for her sake
That should not rudely rouse her : for she mused
On her ill-fated lot ; for day by day
Came suitors fickle, yet importunate ;
Lovers unloving ; faithless lips, and eyes
That counterfeited truth ; and greedy hearts,
That sought her only for her fair domain.
Still they proclaim'd themselves her counsellors,
Spirited by pure love of good alone,
And justice, as the guardian Gods themselves.
So, as she sat and mused, her heart was stirr'd
Within her, and she rose up with a fire
In her dark eyes, and laughter on her lip,
And said, "'Tis finished ; oh I know ye now,
'Tis your last day of power, and 'tis my first ;
Come once again, so that ye come no more."
Four several suitors daily sat with her,
To win her ear by flattery of themselves.
First came a soldier dazzling in his arms ;
Then came a stoled priest both good and wise ;
Then came a wakeful, wily man of law ;
Then came a merchant who knew all the world :
And sometimes an old woman veil'd and grey.
But she brought wisdom without price, and gave

Good counsel without hope of recompense ;
Therefore the damsel loved her and approved.

II

She rose to part, a twinkle in her eye
Of merriment ; a little space, and lo !
Up came the soldier with a towering look,
And bow'd his salutations with brave words ;
Then lifted up his head, as one who felt
A moment more of such humility
Misspent in one the doer of great deeds.
But she said, "Pass, I bid thee come no more!"
Then yet a little space, and after him
The stoled priest, majestical and pale,
And with a smile, so sweet it seem'd as though
He must have wrought an hour to perfect it
To such a sweetness ; then resumed his look
Of great authority, as one who bore
Upon his lips the doom of other men, . . .
And need not look on woman but to win :
But she said, "Pass, I bid thee come no more."
And yet a little space, and after him
The cunning man of law, with steps that seem'd
To think the very grass beneath his feet
Ought not to feel his motions ; and he stood
Suddenly by her side, ere she had heard
One whisper of him, and he turn'd to her
With such a pleasant self-approving air,

As one who said, " Ha ! ha ! I can be near
When I am thought far off, and steal so softly
That none can flee me if I search for them :"
But she said, " Pass, I bid thee come no more !"
Lastly, the merchant, spinning from his face
A dizzying mist of fable and of truth,
And with a hovering mystery on his tongue,
As one who could pour forth a hundred tales
In one brief afternoon ; his memory
A vase, that gush'd forth water mix'd with wine,
And sometimes water only, though it took
A golden lustre from his sunny looks.
She felt a little kinder as he came,
But after-thought rekindled her disdain ;
So she said, " Pass, I bid thee come no more " ;
A long calm interval when they were gone.
Morn lapsed to midday, midday lapsed to even ;
And then the old wife, bowing on her crutch,
Grey-mantled and grey-headed, came anear,
A veil upon her face, thro' which at times
A sparkle, as of younger eyes, would leap.
But when she saw the old familiar form,
She rose and went to meet her, took her hand,
And spoke the aged one with kindly words.
" Welcome ! I saw thee thro' the open gates,
And said, ' She comes, the aged mother comes,
Not for herself, nor yet for any gain
Tho' she be poor, and friendless, and alone,
She came because she loves me.' Welcome then,

Old friend, and let us sit upon this bank,
And hear the seawind thro' this hedge of rose,
And quaff the luscious odour that it brings
From woodbines, and wild-briers ; and let us hark
The everlasting murmur of the leaves,
Sweet hymn of Even, fraught with pleasant dreams,
And peaceful memories." She, the dark-eyed, paused,
And smiled upon her guest ; and, as she smiled
Fearless of aught, Aurora might have seen
With praise the graces she herself had wrought,
Her dewy crimson lip, and sunbrown cheek
Suffused with warm flame, and beheld the mould
Of those tall limbs, that grateful toil had tuned
To such harmonious beauty, knit with strength ;
And heard the ring of her delighted voice,
And seen the starry glitter of those eyes
Deep, dark ; which only the fresh breezes, breathed
At daybreak, ere the dews are blown away
And drown'd in blazing sunrise, and the waves
Of the green ocean of the forest trees
Surge in the dawn-light of the summer day,
And all the thousand glad vitalities
Of morning, blessed morning, could have given her.
And silent stood the dame ; but in her eye
There was a light, such as but rarely burns
In those waste lamps that light the night of eld.
And now she led her down the garden-walks
With measured steps timed to the feeble feet
Of her companion ; so she might survey

On either hand the marvels of the place.
It seem'd a leafy palace, interlaid
With turfy corridors, whose fresh-green roof
Was broider'd with all flowers, pale, red, and gold,
And purple, which the last beams of the sun,
Running along the smooth floor of the sward,
Struck here and there, and turn'd to living gems.
And when the day sank underneath, he left
Broad bands of sanguine flame along the west,
Which the dark fluttering vines, and poplars tall,
Waving before the low-toned airs of even,
Dash'd into tumult like a fiery sea ;
While the late blackbirds, out of fragrant glooms
Of laurel-thickets, fluted their last notes
Sad-sweet, as tho' the day was all too brief
For their delight ; and the dark nightingale
Took up the song, and told unto the stars
All the bright wonders she had seen by day.
They wander'd homeward after many words,
And sat down on a vine-embowered seat,
Hard by the fountain ; and, all lesser talk
Being ended, nearer to her aged friend
She crept in the hush'd twilight, and again
In sadder tones than heretofore she spoke.
“O mother, mother, thou hast heard from me
No other note of welcome than I gave
Ere cares fell on me ; but now, tho' my voice
Sounds cheery, as of old, my heart is sad ;
And only solaced by the warmth of thine,

Which gave me hopes and strength in days gone by.
I am a flower set in a garden fair,
Not cherish'd kindly by sweet dews and light,
But blown on by hot winds, and stormy change,
And torn untimely. What is maidenhood,
Tho' crown'd with beauty and prosperity,
Around her brows the linked lily-buds
Of fancy and of hope, about her heart
The rosy zone of youth, and health, and mirth,
If all, that she calls heaven or earth, becomes
Only a snare; and she is but a bird
With gaudy plumes, a mark for the wild eyes
Of savage men? Oh better wander forth,
Beggar'd of all misnamed felicity,
That without peace is nought but a vain show,
And trust to hard hands and despairing hearts
For sympathy and pity, than to stand,
The seeming idol of adoring loves,
But yet the victim of as many hates,
The glances of whose eyes are soft as light,
Cruel as lightning. Tho' my years are few,
The voice that whispers to me from my heart
Is as an oracle; my timid eyes—
That droop'd so often under the proud looks
Of those false lovers, my true enemies,
Whereof so oft I told thee—yet could see,
More subtly from their ambush, the cross-threads
Of all their toils cast on me with less art
Because of my simplicity; as full oft,

In sidelong glances, I have better mark'd
The shifting colours of the earth and sky,
And delicate hues 'twixt light and dark, that flee
From the full sight. Therefore this very morn
I have done a deed, that, if it bring me bale,
Will leave me freedom. I am free; no more
The basilisk shall strike me with his eye
Among my own dear flowers and evergreens.
The men I fear'd are fled; and have no plea
To urge me more—as when they feign'd to take
My silence for my will—for they have heard,
And from my gentle lips, unfeigned scorn.
But, should it be that I have spoken in vain,
And they should come with weapons worse than scorn,
Should come again—O mother, other fear
Shadows me now, I know not what; old friend,
Counsel me well." She shed some stormy tears;
Then bow'd her head upon the kindly heart
Of that old friend: the aged woman smiled;
"Fear not thou evil for itself, nor them
Whose arms are evil, little one," she said;
"Good is a beam straight from the unchanging sun;
Evil the cloud that intercepts the light,
But cannot quench it; and thy vexed heart
Sunn'd once again by blessed rays of peace,
Will bless the hours of sorrow, for the sake
Of that they leave behind them, strength and calm;
And purer love for all things loved before,
When bliss comes back, like sunshine thro' the cloud.

Fear not the evil ; half their days go by
In watching one another ; and sometimes
They will do ev'n the good they have forsworn,
So that a rival be the worse for it.

And, should they whisper in thine ear again,
It will be treason one against another,
So that the traitor may be better for it.

If they should steal into these walks again,
One of thy many foes, whoe'er he be,
Will be thy sentinel against the rest ;
And thou shalt be their earthquake, shattering
Each against each, till not a foe is left.

Fear not the evil for itself ; for all
That man calls evil, circumstance opposed,
Or hope defeated, man may overcome
Even by manhood, or o'er-live by faith.

Or, if he cannot, life goes by so fast
Counted in moments, that our days appear
To scud like drops of rain before the wind,
To flee like rushing waters toward the sea,
And joy and grief, its bubbles, go with it.

Some rail at poverty, and some at wealth ;
And most against their lot, and at themselves ;
And some at beauty, some at ugliness.

But life is brief, my child ; my seventy years
Are long since past, and thou may'st call me dead,
If so thou wilt, for ought I not to be so ?

And now I know that Life—the shadow cast
From higher Life—is, as a shadow, swift,

From flying clouds between us and the sun ;
And wonder at the madness of the world,
That, like a fierce crowd at a theatre,
Thrust, jostle, trample one another down
To see the unreal thing—and Life is such,
Unless we live the very Life of Life,
The good we love and know—for whether Life
End with the days of nature, or fly on
For ever, it is vain, if it beget
No higher issues, than to sate the sense,
And hallow empty shows. Though it be fill'd
With glory and honour, it is vain again,
Compared with the high being yet to be.
Think of these words when I lie low ; let not
Good fortune dazzle thee, nor ill confound,
Nor all earth's blisses chain thee to the earth.
And now take heart ; I promise thee good days.
Give me a cup of water, then farewell.”
Swiftly she went, and with the brimming cup
Turn'd smiling, and would have handed it, when lo
The aged woman was not ! had she fled ?
But how, and whither ? a Nymph, a Goddess was she ?
Mask'd and now vanish'd ? While she ponder'd thus
A lovely youth, with large eyes and deep hair,
Came down the vine-walks with swift step ; she look'd
With wonder at him ; “ Sure 'tis he,” she said,
“ My vinedresser ; too well I know that face ;
Else should I fear some other crafty guest.
For now his raiment is of one who walks

In palaces ; shall he too mock me now,
And hope to go unpunish'd ? What if I call
Back one of those whom I dismiss'd this morn,
And bid him to avenge me on this boy ? ”
And then she spoke with wrathful voice, it seem'd ;
“ Say, wherefore dost thou come before me now,
As though I had not bid thee seek the north
O' the garden, where the orchard trees are few,
And the sun finds them late, and they have need
Of all thy care, o'errun with parasites,
And the poor folk that work there need the skill
A master's lore can show them ? And is that
A vinedresser's apparel ? Sure, it seems
Thou hast a mind to mock me like the rest,
With boldness without warrant ; day is not
The time for masking ; and if lords may take
The countryman's own fashion for a while,
It is not fitting for the countryman
To ape the lord's habiliments. What now !
Hast thou drunk wine too early ? Thou too, thou,
Who art ”—She would have said, “ my slave,” but felt
Forced breath of anger fail her, as she spoke ;
And the warm blood, but not of anger, flow'd
Up from her heart ; and to herself she sigh'd,
“ Alas ! he is my master, I his slave.
Yet 'tis this secret knowledge of myself
That scares me from myself, and bids me hide
My true humility with mock-disdain,
And frowns I hate ; for I have seen his face

Daily pass near, and graven every smile ;
And mark'd his mien as he stept thro' the vines ;
And character'd upon my molten heart
The languors of his eye ; and heard plain speech
As tho' 'twere music. And oh ! when he sang
It was as tho' my will were drown'd in bliss,
And swept away ! and I must shun him thus,
And prison my own self ; for if he thought
On me as madly as I think on him,
The world, that knows not love, and lives in pride,
Hath piled a wall of adamant between
Two things so far apart, as he and I.
But oh ! I dream, he thinks of nought but mirth,
Pastime and folly." He look'd on her in doubt
And wonder, and with faltering accents said :
"Lady, it were indeed too bold for me
To venture on thy presence as I am,
If I were that that I have seemed to be,
Up to this moment ; but this is my garb
As others see me, and I mock thee not
In taking back what I had laid aside,
Though, as a gardener, I stole thy trust,
And loved to hear thee chide me or approve,
Better than all court looks and silver lies.
Rememberest thou my unforgotten morn,
When first, with lowly weeds and rustic speech,
I stood before thee in the trellis'd walk
That slopes up to thy porch ? I humbly craved
To serve thee, promising thee faithful hours,

Sedulous care and skill ; for I had learnt
All the vine-dresser knows, and how to lop
The trailing sprays, and wanton gambolings
Of leafy overflourishes ; to thin
The knotted bunches of the coming fruits,
Lest too much plenty, like a liar's boast,
End in too little ; how to train and stay
The luscious roses round the supple stems ;
And how to dress grey Winter in his best,
And give him youth and beauty like the Spring.
All for thy sake I learnt these pleasant arts
From countryfolk about my father's house,
That thou mightst daily look upon my face,
And hear my voice. It was my cruel sport—
I tell thee frankly now that all is past—
All for a worthless wager with my friends,
To win thee somehow, and, being won, to know
That I had won thee by myself alone ;
Thus should I triumph reckless of all else,
Not with old honours, not with a great name,
But with my youth, and mirth, and many songs,
Service, and converse. Oh ! what have I done ?
It was as tho' the fowler were himself
Snared by the bird he follow'd to his death.
The heart itself that was to vanquish thine
Was taken captive in a single hour,
And bound for ever ; daily sight of thee
Served but to feed my love and my despair ;
For all my simple armoury was nought

Against the seeming prowess of thy scorn.
My own fond dream was true, but, welladay,
I was what I had fancied thou wouldest be ;
Thou wert the thing I thought to be myself ;
And I who vow'd to war without a wound,
With unresisting sweetness, fell myself
Slain by a marble statue ! ”

When he ceased
Silent she sat and moveless, and her face
Turn'd from him. Was it anger, pride, or scorn,
Or pity there ? Pale was she, but again
Flash'd suddenly ; and oh ! he thought he saw
The gleam of a half-smile. Softly he said,
“ Say, must I part for ever ? Then I crave.
Lady, a pardon for the worthless wiles
That have not won thee. If the soldier came,
The lawyer, and the merchant, and the priest,
They came, and went, and come no more, because
They came not for thee ; 'tis not so with me.
Lady, if I go from thee, ev'n as they,
I bear away with me a heart, so full
Of one, no others can possess it more ;
Thoughts which no baser thoughts have power to stir.
I too, like them, could tell thee of myself,
If thou couldst hear me ; not of wonders seen,
Or wrought in the outward, but of inner pains
And raptures, like the sun-bursts and the showers
Of early spring ; self-flatteries, and despairs ;

Great lights, and sudden darkness ; fever fires,
And fever chills. Oh ! many a day I sigh'd,
And my heart fail'd me ; in thine eyes methought
I read disdain if they turn'd not on me ;
And in thy speech the icy breath of pride,
Because thy words were calm ; oh ! liefer I
Had heard thee chide me for a bitter while,
Like mountain gusts that search the inmost bowers,
Than pass by coldly with a low brief word.
For oh ! believe me, 'tis true love alone
Can bear the pelting of the storm, that turns
The cold heart backward ; love alone can feel
The darts of scorn, and weep, yet not despair.
The faithless heart is faint, and but a coward ;
The truthless heart can never truly love ;
The false vow is the blossom, cut asunder
By the snow-winds, before the fruit is set.
But, when the fruit is form'd, the bitter winds
Beat it not down, tho' they be hard to bear."
" How knowest thou," she cried, " what lovers came
Before thee, and whether they were false or true ? "

III

" What if I tell thee all the soldier said ? "

Replied the youth. " How canst thou know," she cried,
" Words only whisper'd in mine ear ? " " I know
Their boastful tongues that deal with things to be,
In self-applause, as tho' they had been done,

Proud of the glory which is yet to win,
As if they own'd it, like the peacock there,
That lifts his plumes because we look at him ;
He shows to others' eyes what by his own
Was never seen ; or, if he had beheld
A valiant stroke dealt by another's hand,
He makes it seem unto his listening love
As tho' 'twas his own deed. So well he paints
The action to its issue, that she dreams
He is the hero of it, and forgets
That he, who stands 'twixt life and death, and strives,
Is better witness'd by a looker-on
Than his own record of it ; so he grows
A giant to the simple maid, who yields
To her weak heart, and thinks his swelling words
And feigned looks have won her. Said he not ?
'We sought the robbers in their mountain-hold,
All night, with cat-like footfalls creeping on
'Twixt the dark slopes that wall the vale, and saw,
At break of dawn, the ancient crazy tower
Black in the sunlight, and an hundred men
Stood 'mid the blaze of morning cresting it,
Each as two men in stature ; but my heart
Grew stronger momently, for now the hour
Was come to win my laurels ; arrows flew
From battlement and bulwark ; javelins rang
Against our helms and shields, a hail of death
That thaw'd upon the heat of our resolve
Like hail in summer. As we paused before

The barr'd, and clamp'd, and burly, knotted door,
Waiting the iron ram to beat it in,
I cried unto the chief, "Come down, and take
The scorn of one who, if thou comest not,
Will damn thee for a coward ; if thou dost,
Will strip thee of thy borrow'd braveries,
Will match thee, wert thou bravest of all men,
And not a thief ; take back thy stolen arms,
And only take one lesson from thine art
And steal thy life." Whereat the brigand frown'd,
And his black brows seem'd to shut in his eyes,
And sware dread oaths, and shook his mailed hand,
And strode down by the winding stair alone,
His iron heels crashing the dinted stone,
And came forth thro' the dark arch of the door,
As one about to spring upon our host,
And cope, a single lion, with the dogs.
We waged the combat round about the tower
With sword and buckler, I, the lesser man,
A cubit. But his heart was full of ill,
That palsied his red hand, and film'd his eyes,
So that his blows were as a drunken man's,
And clave the air ; and as he whirl'd his brand,
A mighty semicircle o'er my head,
He miss'd the mark, fell forward, and the point
Of my own weapon met his brawny weight,
And he fell, like the shadow of the tower,
As the sun glanced out from a passing cloud,
Swiftly ; and on his breast I set my foot,

As his eyes closed in darkness.’’ “ Hold,” she cried,
“ This is most wonderful, for all I heard
Thou hast repeated.” “ But not all he said,
Dear girl, for, trust me, well I know the man.
He haunts the wineshops, and, when he hath quaff’d
Two or three beakers, little lying elves
Play antics in his brain, and lead him on
From onefeat to another, till at last,
When simple souls have wonder’d at his words,
He thinks at last he is what he would be.
This is not all, for treason against Truth,
E’en in small matters, strengthens by its use,
As well as Honour—like a workman’s arm—
And, when time serves, becomes a poison’d shaft
To wound the guileless. Know thou then this man
As I do know him, for he said to me,
While I look’d on him with disdainful eyes
That said as well as words could do ‘ A lie ! ’
‘ Ha ! ha ! my friend, and what if it be so ?
Yestere’en I won the heart of a sweet maid—
The like of whom through all the countryside
Ye would not find—by this same fairy tale—
While they who know not such a gentle art
Lack half the means to win the gentle ones.’’
Then spake she, blushing under frowning brows
Like sundown under storm-cloud ; “ ’Tis an arm
As perilous to wield too oft, as though
An arrow should glance inward from a bow,
And pierce the hand that would have sent it home ; .

So say no more of him ; e'en, while he spoke,
I doubted, and my doubt lock'd up my heart."

IV

Again the youth, demurely smiling, said,
"What if I tell thee of that merchantman ?
Rememberest thou his many wondrous tales ;
His wanderings o'er forsaken shores ; his feats
Among the islands ; and his hard-won wealth ;
His treasures raked up from beneath old wrecks
And seaweed ; or, by diver's strength and skill,
Dragg'd from the deep sea, where in purple calm
Lie undisturb'd and undiscover'd gems
Far under the sea monsters, as they throw
Their downward shadows on them ? Said he not ?
'And once we anchor'd in a little bay,
Entering by one tall gate from the outer sea,
Whence rose on all sides, like great prison-walls,
Sheer precipices, pinnacled and spired
With spearlike crags that caught the blood-red light
Of the Indian eve ; the night was still and clear
With stars that were as little suns. But soon
The moon arose ere we were well asleep,
And roused me, as it glanced into mine eyes,
Rolling above the towers and steeples dark
Of those huge battlements ; and, swift as light,
The grey rocks into silver were transform'd.
I sat up wondering ; what was that I saw ?

Was I still dreaming? no—around me lay
My weary mates, and not an eye unclosed
But mine. O monstrous vision! for the cliffs
And crags were clutch'd, and grasp'd, and swathed in
folds
That seem'd an hundred mighty serpents, risen
Out of the still deep underneath, and black
As the uttermost abyss of Erebus!
And as I glared aghast the ship began
To heave, and quake, and shudder, and the sea
Itself—O horror!—seem'd to change to land
That rock'd beneath us! and methought I saw
Two moonlike lamps fix'd on me thro' the gloom,
That moved and lighten'd like two living orbs.
I could not cry, my heart beat as the sound
Of thunder in mine ears, and then grew still.
For lo, another wonder! I beheld
The monstrous serpents curl'd about the rocks
Slide slowly back, loosing their iron grasp,
Dragging with them a storm of riven scars,
That hurl'd upon the waters; then again
The moving isle, whereon the vessel lay,
Sank slowly, and drew back its fearful arms.
Then I drew breath, and shouted to my men
To raise the anchor, set sail, and away! ”
“ And yet the thing itself, tho' wonderful,
Is not so wondrous as to hear thee tell it,
A secret never told thee,” she exclaimed
In wild astonishment. But he pursued,

“ I too was only as a little child,
Athirst for all things wild and wonderful !
And yet a whisper, faint at first and low
As the first ripple when a rising breeze
Ruffles the blue, of doubt began to stir
Within me after all that I had heard.
What if his too should be the gentle art
Boasted of by the plumed man of war,
Hidden this time beneath seafaring words ?
And so oftentimes I wander'd in the dusk—
The hour when he came forth to sit awhile
Under the fluttering trellis, as the breeze
Awoke from slumber after the long day—
And by well-feigned wonder and delight,
And that best adulation which takes form
Of self-submission, and a cup or two
Of his own grape, grown on a slope behind
Though he had boasted it of Lesbian growth,
I so won on him that he trusted me.
And, as a babe may lead the way across
A quicksand, and beguile a thoughtless man,
Whose heavy limbs are swallow'd up at once,
I led him on till he out-did himself.
So, at the opening of a second flask,
His wit flew up so wildly against the wind
That it came down head foremost, and I laugh'd,
As only once in life a man can laugh,
And clapp'd him on the shoulder ; and ‘ Come, come,’
I cried, half smother'd, ‘ thou canst never pass

This paragon of glories. Tell me true,
My friend, that thou art lying, and so take
More honour from thine art than can accrue
From any ventures that thou may'st have scored
Upon the tablet of thy memory,
Which are no part of thee ; for Circumstance
Is from without, Invention from within.'

' Well, well,' he said, half flatter'd and half wroth,
' Think twice ere thou dost scorn this gentle art.
Thine eyes run o'er with laughter, other eyes
Flow from sweet sympathy to hear me tell
My wanderings and wayfarings, and the fates
That I have rush'd on, wondering to be saved,
The perils I have dared, the fearful sights
That I have seen, and yet escaped to tell.'
And then he said with self-approving smile,
' Though I be something more than a mere boy,
My hair a little touch'd by early frost,
There is one who would listen to me now,
If I may judge from such sweet signs, as speak
Of sympathetic motions in her soul,
A flush, a springing tear, or blenching lips ;
And if I have not all I tell the boys ;
The buried treasures, dug up in the night
By one pale lamp in solitary tombs
Hard by forsaken cities ; last bequests
Of travellers caught by sudden death in wastes
Of burning sand ; yet hath she, well I trow,
Fair slopes of viny lands, fat breadths of grain ;

Orchards that fill their turf-walks with the smell
Of first pink blossoms and last ruby fruits,
As when the incensed thuribles are shook,
And the cloud-odour streams through arch and aisle
Of a great temple ; and she herself is fair,
Tho' not so fair as all that goodly place.
And, if she were her grandam, she would take
Rich hues of beauty from that rich abode.
Oh ! thro' green arches of the nearer bowers
Are seen the waving heads of distant woods,
Perennial verdure fed by streams, that leap
From the high hills, o'erupt by some far snows,
That cool the eye, hot with the midday sun.
And farther still the ever-waving seas,
Whispering symphonious answers to the sighs
Of the sweet gusts of Summer, sleep and dream,
Or shout from their abyss with awful voice
To the high thunders, when the winter-night
Shakes all the world, except that garden-rest,
Which hears the dread winds from the peaks above
Softn'd to something like a lullaby ;
And all that Eden shall, methinks, be mine.'"
Again she said—and blush'd with frowning brow—
A sunset under storm-cloud, "'Tis an arm
As perilous to wield too oft, as though
An arrow should glance inward from the bow,
And pierce the hand that would have sent it home ;
So say no more of him ; even, while he spoke,
I doubted, and my doubts lock'd up my heart."

V

Again that youth, demurely smiling, said,
“Then came a stoled priest”—“O wonderful!”
She cried, “hast thou the secrets of all hearts
Pour’d into thy one ear?” “That Priest,” he said,
“With his sweet words, and deep-set eyes, and speech
Sown thick with marvels and with mysteries,
Came nigher to thee than the freest tongue
Of all the rest. Did he not say, fair girl,
‘The Gods have blest thy fair inheritance’?
And over his dark brow he laid his hand
To shade it, as he turn’d his eyes about
To look upon the teeming Paradise,
And rubb’d his palms, and smiled :

“ ‘ But men talk of thee
As tho’ thou wert a flask that holds sweet wine,
The bloomy rind that circles the sweet fruit,
The olive-branch that kindles the warm flame,
The gold-dropt finch that utters the gay song ;
And neither flask, nor rind, nor branch, nor bird,
Are aught without the precious gifts they hold.
So thou, with all thy beauty, art to them
No more than raiment is to thy fair self,
The better with it, but no less without.
Wouldst thou not scorn to be thrown in, as ’twere
The ballast to fill up the empty bark
That it might sail right smoothly? changeable

To them, as the strange lizard, whose bright hues
Glance into grey according to its state ?
Prized to the measure of the present worth
Of thine own wealth, which, if it drift away
Thro' cracks and chinks of their improvidence,
Dice, drink, or worse, thou wouldest, with the same stealth,
Vanish with all thy beauty from their thoughts,
Till, with the last coin, flung into the dark,
Thou wouldest be nothing, or cast out with it ?
But we, who serve the Gods, and guard the shrines
Both day and night, are not as other men ;
But, as the mountains fill the plains with life,
Feeding them with fresh brooks and purest air ;
We have for our reward the holy gifts
Of Wisdom and of Knowledge ; power to do,
And to undo ; to bless men, or to curse.
So, if the breath of some slight-minded man
Link'd to thee, would draw down the wrath of Heaven
Upon him, think, that thou wouldest suffer with him,
Partner of evils as of good ; if he
Should draw down on thee poverty, and waste
Thy corn-lands and thy vineyards ; send the worm,
And fly to eat the heart of thy fair fruits ;
Dry up the rills that feed thy purple plots,
Mint beds, and parsley borders, and fresh thyme ;
So he, the holy man, would lift his hand—
But lift his hand—and sunder the grey clouds
Of winter, and win forth the blissful sun ;
Drive out into the borders of thy foes

Scorpions, toads, serpents, and all noxious airs ;
Make thy rare roses breathe a rarer breath ;
And fill the red grape with a better wine.
Bethink thee then, sweet lady (but his voice
Sounded as threatening, though his words were smooth),
Bethink thee what it is to lose or win
The love of such, which blesseth the abodes
Of the obedient, and with his frown
Sends fear and trembling into faithless hearts.
But if a sickness fall on flocks or herds
Of better men ; a sudden blight infest
The young grape or ripe grain ; hath he not arts
To stay the ill and turn it into good ?
And if the vintager, who toils i' the sun,
Falls smitten, doth not he restore him whole
By charm or syrup ? lay his lulling hand
Upon the reaper's palsied limb, and heal it
By magic touches only ? And, if a child,
Struck by the wing of Autumn, writhes in hell,
'Twixt fire and frost, knows he not how to drive
The Furies from within him, and bring back
The temperate blood into the ashen cheek ?
Bethink thee then, sweet lady (but his voice
Seem'd yet more threatening, though his words were smooth),
Bethink thee what it is to lose or win
The love of such.' And then he stretch'd his arms,
And moved his hands before thee, I know why.
Thy heart beat with quick fear, thy senses sank
Into a stealthy drowse, that deepen'd still,

Still deepen'd ever. But it so fell out,
Just at that moment, that a mountain-gust
Bore down upon the roaring forest oaks.
A sudden burst of thunder shook the land ;
Leaves whirl'd and blossoms snow'd ; the fountain dash'd
Thwart splashes o'er the drowned urns of flowers ;
A dusty whirlwind rose 'twixt land and sea ;
The peacocks scream'd, the songbirds shrill'd and fled ;
The tumult stay'd his hand, and with a start
He turn'd, and so the spell was broke ; and thou
Awakedst ; else who knows what were the end ?”
“O Heaven !” she cried, “ this is more wonderful
Than the enchantment's self, that thou shouldst know
All, and particular that so befell.
But know this, not more surely did I wake
From that weird drowse, than I rose up, and ran,
And hid myself behind thick laurel boughs,
Where, he could never know ; for, while he spake,
I doubted, and my doubts lock'd up my heart.”

VI

Again that youth, demurely smiling, said,
“ And yet another came.” “ O wonderful !”
She cried, and started from her mossy seat ;
“ Art thou a man or god ? for we have heard
That the Olympians take the form of man
For earthly purposes ; yet would I fain
Be spared such high communion, such as I.”

He laugh'd. "There came another, a small man,
Wrinkled with seeming age, though he was young.
And, as he trod along the turf-walk green,
Did he not step as feately as a cat,
And blink about him, rubbing his dry palms,
And smile, as one who is about to spring
On something helpless? Took he not his seat
Beside thee in the twilight, like to one
Who was unworthy even to raise his eyes
Above thy sandals? And with humble mien,
And smirking deferences, and a voice
That would be sweet, and yet, with all its art,
If he lapsed back a moment to himself,
Rasp'd like a saw, and whistled like a hinge;
Said he not? 'O sweet lady, I have thought
That this world's changes out of good to ill
Come oftentimes unforeseen, as mountain winds
That lay the proud pines low, and lash the sea
To madness in a moment; and, methought,
If one so pure, so gentle, and so fair,
As is the mistress of these happy seats,
Should come within the scowl of some ill Fate,
Who would be nigh to fence against bad arts,
Envy, and Malice, Craft, and Force, and Greed?
What could the soldier bring thee but his sword?
What could the merchant bring thee but his wealth?
What could the priest bring but his oracles?
And yet the sword of war is vain in peace;
And wealth is never given to those who lack;

And holy counsels change not human ills.
The soldier's sword would fight against the wind,
For violence scatters not the charm of words ;
The merchant's hands the faster gripe his gold,
Or lose his wealth in seeking to save thine ;
The holy prophet makes thy doom more sure
By turning all thy thoughts from earth to heaven.
Yet some there be who are so skill'd to scent
All lurking evils, and as swift to hark
As watchdogs, even when the winds are out,
And would so fasten their well-sharpen'd fangs
On any prowler as to leave on him
But half his skin ; and not alone possess'd
Of skill to fence and guard, but, if so will'd,
They might with subtlest warfare—for such power
As, being well used, is godlike to protect,
Might, being abused, be mighty to destroy—
Into the heedless camp of them who sleep
Unsentinel'd, bear sudden havoc down ;
Tho' 'tis not fit that he, whose steps are right,
Should stay to cast a look down the dark walks
Of Evil, but for ends of Good itself,
Oh no, 'tis not. But, O dear lady, I
Speak of such powers as one might speak of Heaven's,
Whose arm may cast forth lightnings, or withhold ;
Breathe health or sickness, scatter dews or frost ;
Give life or death ; and, if the Gods do this,
Do they not furnish patterns unto Man,
Tho' Man may not dare follow them in act,

Lest he should seem to mock their majesty ?
I speak of this, as but the omnipotence
Of men, which, if it save, may sometimes scathe ;
But, oh no, 'tis not fit ; who, if they would
Do good, can do it, and, if they would, do ill,
And have no fear of force or counteracts.
Bethink thee then, fair lady (but his voice
Was harsh and threatening, though his words were smooth),
Bethink thee what it is to lose or win
The love of such. I knew two men of wealth,
And they were neighbours ; a green bank and thorns
Sunder'd them from each other, but there grew
A tall old oak among the brush and briers,
So old, the trunk was hollow, and wild cats
Housed in it ; each one claim'd it for his own,
And swore it was an inch on his own side.
They sought the counsels of two like myself,
Subtle and wise—although I will not boast—
Subtle and wise they were, I knew the men
Well as myself ; but Heaven forbid that I
Should work such wiles as theirs for love of self.
Each brought his gold to gain them ; and they spoke
At first brave words that brought a hope to each.
Daily they said, "I toil for thee alone ;
The scrolls are well-nigh ready" ; still each came
Daily, and brought them gold ; and now their speech
Grew dark, and darker, as the bright gold grew.
And then the feud, that was begun for nought
But lack of thought, and leisure, from those seeds

Sent up two thistle-heads of empty pride.
They vow'd that, whatsoever were the end,
They would abide it, reckless of their fate,
They still would wage the war for glory's sake,
Tho' both should perish. So for years they came,
And went, and came, till all their gold was gone,
And they stood, glaring on each side the hedge,
One on the other, now opposed in hate,
As once in folly, now alike in want
As once in riches ; and before the scrolls
Were fully writ and read, before the judge
Could utter his award, the aged tree
Fell with a crash, as they stood on each side,
Threatening and pale ; it was a stormy morn.
And, when they saw it, suddenly their eyes
Were open'd, and they parted, nevermore
To meet ; for they were driven from house and home,
And wander'd beggars till they died ; and who
Laugh'd, as they met them ? They their counsellors
Subtle and wise, their guests, and trusty friends,
Crueller than the wild cat, as he sprang
Out of the hollow oak-tree when it fell
On that same stormy morn, with two dead birds,
One in his teeth, the other in his claw.'"

"Wonder of wonders ! What shall I believe ?"

She cried ; "that each has whisper'd in thine ear
Among the shadows, ere he went away,
All that he utter'd to me here alone ?
Or that wild echoes have betray'd them to thee ?

Or dreams reveal'd? But tell me one thing more;
Canst thou not tell me now what she too said,
The aged mother?" Then he dropt his eyes,
And, softly stepping nigh her, leant his head,
And whisper'd, "Pardon, lady, if I can;
She is my mother's mother, household friend,
Oracle, counsellor, and treasure-house
Of life-love and of wisdom. Yes, I know
She never fail'd to praise one whom she loves,
And, when she spoke of him, as is her wont,
I fear her love hath proved as bad as hate.
Alas! she will have framed so fair a thing,
That, by the side of her bright image, he
Will seem its hollow shadow." When he ceased,
She laugh'd so wild a laugh that he turn'd pale.
"Ah well!" she said, "not Minos, judge and king,
Could have rebuked thy wanton wickedness
More sharply than avenging Chance hath done.
Hadst thou not spoken, as a man may do,
Thy woman's wiles, thy poor unmanly arts,
Thy hard vainglory, and thy pure self-love,
Had earn'd for thee a woman's cureless fate,
To break thy heart in silence; but thy mouth,
Confessing thine offending, bids my tongue
To answer; canst thou murmur, if my scorn
Condemns thee openly, and to thy sin
Adds scarlet shame to mingle with the pain
Of unrequited——" But he heard her not,
Or seem'd not to have heard, but, kneeling there,

He sigh'd, and whisper'd, "Pardon me once more,
And listen, lady, to a few last words"—
Nearer he bent unto her as he spoke—
"Oh she hath babbled to me many things
That I had never dreamt of but for her,
Else had I never ventured here again.
Her many years have look'd down on thy few,
As when an eagle earthward turns his eye
Down thro' the clouds, and sees the tiny things
Hidden from humbler vision. Pardon me,
Too daring lover, if wild hope at last,
Kin to despair, defies all fear, and tells thee
Her cunning read thy secret ; her old eyes
Served her to follow thine ; her aged ears
Heard the low sigh, half breathed and half represt,
As one I will not name came by the way,
Or when from far away his jocund voice
Broke with a song the intervals between
Your evening communings ; so he grew bold.
Ah ! hath she taught me how to read thyself,
Spite of thyself, and all thy bitter words ?
Or have I trusted a vain oracle
Who was too thine own seer, and hearted friend ?
And now, if I have stirr'd thy heart, what need
Of mockery or of masking ? young love's truth
Full surely is a match for old heart's faith ;
Love's fire worth all the frosty light of age ;
Constancy may be led of Hope, as well
As follow Memory. Then behold in me

Thine ancient friend transform'd to loving youth ;
Accept in me, instead of garner'd grain
Of wintry wisdom, promises of Spring,
Sunlight for moonlight, Day instead of Night.
Make not poor Iphis of me, or, if I be,
Save me from his ill-fortune ; for the Gods
Love better the unlovable than them
Who are unloving." As the young man spoke,
He came, and took her hand, that lay in his
Without disdain or fear ; and then he said :
" In Cyprus isle there is a lovely spot,
Fear'd and forsaken ; country-folk at morn
Leave it far off ; by night, 'tis said, are heard
Voices of weeping and of scorn ; for there,
'Tis said, that once a broken-hearted boy,
Whose life was full of sweetness, as a rose
Of honey-dew,—that heart so tender-true
Was crushed by the hard heart of her he loved ;
And so he slew himself before her door,
And she pass'd forth disdainfully, as one
Who had been wrong'd. Oh ! strange that woman,
framed
By Heaven for soft emotions, loving sighs,
Sympathies, consolations, sometimes proves
Cold as the icicle, whose essence is
Soft as her tears, while the fierce strength of man—
Armour for strife, and victory over ills—
Is shiver'd by a glance, as though it were
By lightning that dissolves the adamant !

But the Gods cursed her deed, and it is said
They turn'd her into stone!" She answer'd him,
"O boy, words are not things, nor hopes, nor fears
Reality; if all the Gods should wreak
Their wrath upon me, can I change my heart?
'Tis theirs to give me one if I have not,
And not to hate me if I cannot love.
If I have seen thee, and cannot approve,
Must I be turn'd to stone, when there may be
Haply some face which I have never seen,
Which, seen but once, would melt me, were I stone?"
She ended, but his heart, that danced with hope,
Was on a sudden, as the leaping brooks,
Lock'd in a moment by the frost; and pale
He turn'd away, and his cold hand relax'd,
And a large tear stood in those happy eyes.
But she came forward, laughing like the sun,
That shatters the dark rack; and, looking up
To his down gaze, said in a low sweet voice—
That nothing sure could echo but his heart,
And with a charming smile upon her lip,
That nothing sure might image but his soul—
"Dear boy, my words were wanton, thine were true.
Fear not, I know thee, I have seen thee oft;
The many forms and faces that go by
Our daily life, tho' noted, pass away
Fleetly, as shadows of a Summer-cloud,
That leaves no fixen image; but, dear boy,
Mine eyes have stolen thee, mine heart hath hid

The stolen treasure ; hath apparell'd it
So radiantly, no painter ever wrought
In such proof colours ; so we are old friends.
He answer'd : " Ofttimes have I pass'd thy gate,
Hoping to catch the glimmer of thy robe
Among the cool green shadows, and have heard
Thee singing in the dawn amid the birds,
Who knew thee and who fear'd not, and I said,
' The thrush, that runs along the lawn, and flutes
Within his brake, is far more blest than I,
Who cannot enter, save thro' fancies, here,
Fancies by day, and blissful dreams by night.
The purple branch that kisses thy dark curls,
When thou art pacing under the cool vines,
More blest than I who walk without, and see
No shadow of thy shape, and may not touch
Thy footmark, or pluck off the full-blown rose
Thy hand hath lifted with its weight of dew—
Lest it should fall, so tender is thy care—
Though I have sworn, oh better lie with her
Under cold marble, than to live without her ;
For Death would be a glory, where thou art ! ” ”

VII

And then she smiled on him, and gave her hand,
And led him forth under the pleached boughs,
And alleys of her gardens ; fairyland ;
None knew what blissful hands had planted it,

And fashion'd in primeval happy hours.
The sun was sloping 'twixt the noon and even,
And, thro' the blown leaves, dazzled in their eyes,
And shot the domed leaves with countless hues,
Emerald, pale fire, and purple ; every arch
Of the long bowery avenues was framed
Of linked branchwork, and thick-woven sprays,
Bearing all manner of fruits of fragrant rind,
Whose rosy-red or pale-gold clusters mix'd
With the pearl and silver of their own sweet flowers ;
And with them twined about the sturdier stems
The lissom vine, full-bearing, hanging down
Lower than the orbed gold of other fruits.
Their amber, green, and crimson berries seem'd
Like wealth of all rare gems, suspended there
From unseen hands, and took the eager glance
Of the hot sunbeam, as it leapt through all
The flowered umbrage, till it set on fire
The sweet blood in them, and then fled away
Leaving its warm shaft in their quivering hearts.
Side-arches, twisted of green osiers, graced
With drooping tassels of lithe creeping plants,
Led them to orchards, where the gnarled fig,
Ancient as Time, it seem'd, and overladen
With their dark bunches under ample leaves,
Shaded the cool green under, and, beneath
The curving boughs, showed farther off some bowers
Of paler leafage where the pink-cheek'd peach
Hued like the delicate clear shells, that sleep

On sunny shores, and drink into themselves
The rathest blushes of the dawning East,
Distill'd its syrup from the brooding light,
With persic apple nectarine, between
Rich apricots, that breathed of mountain flowers.
They heard the big plum tumble from its perch,
And hide itself amid the turf and bells,
That, bending o'er it, kept intact and fresh
Its bloom, pure dew of tenderest pearly clouds
Shed down ere sunrise ; till the blackbird's eye,
Piercing the woof of wavering herbage, saw
A thirsty sunbeam light upon his prize,
And ceased his song to pierce its ruby heart.
Large pears of divers shapes, red, ruddy-brown,
And amber-colour'd, clung so thick together
The very leaves were hidden under them ;
And when the ripe fruit, like a honey-vase,
Fell down with all its weight, the nimble thrush
Was ready with his sharp bill to unseal
And open out the luscious gold within.
And, all betwixt the laden fruit trees wound,
And in the middle of the turf-walks, lay
Smooth, sheeny paths of shellwork, radiant
As 'twere with fixed rainbows ; with bright fringe
Of seasonable flowers, set in fair rows
On either hand, with other rows between,
To blossom later when the earlier fail'd,
And make the Winter merry with their smiles.
Each pathway had its fountain in the midst

Dashing its diamond up into the blue,
That fell in dust of dew upon the leaves ;
The rest was drunk up into little grooves
Of pebble-stones, that open'd here and there,
To bear the waters of the tiny rills
Straight to the roots of the o'erhanging blooms.
While they walk'd hand in hand between the trees,
They saw far off, yet near enough to mark,
Blithe troops of country-folk, at gleesome toil
Gathering fresh fruits, or flowers, and with their songs
Cheering themselves ; others they saw apart
At dance in the green shadows ; elders sat,
And, with the wicker'd flask between them, talk'd
Of past and future, and with trembling hands
Sign'd where some loving pair were, even as they
In days of prime, whose hope they were, to be
Again as they are in the days to come.
And where a dark-green archway of tall boughs
Open'd upon the champaign, they could see
Some purple mountain, shadowing like a tower,
As 'twere a buttress between them and ill.
She led him down hush'd dingles, where green light
Scarce found its way thro' cross-boughs, and the air
Was dim and cool, as in some oratory ;
And the eye, shifting from the day without,
Not all at once could riddle the soft glooms
Where the dews, ready for the thirsty sun,
Waited in vain ; and, when a sudden beam
Shot thro' the leafy network, it lit up

The quivering pendent drops ; they seem'd to flash
And throb like fireflies, then grew dark again.
There was a sound of waters far and near ;
Of mountain rills that call'd unto each other,
Lapsing from slope to slope, and whirling off
Sparkles and foambells, and then spreading smooth,
Unrippled darkness underneath the shades,
Till all the babbling shallows grew into
A still deep lake, which, as a mirror seen
In a dark chamber, steals, we know not how,
All the stray gleams that hover near to it,
Show'd the thick umbrage grasp'd with flowery cords
And hung with ivy ; and the curly vine,
Wildrose, and woodbine, faintly pictured in
The clear dark under. Here sweet birds had swung
Their dewy cradles, and flew in and out
From sun to shadow, and brought to their homes
Sparks from the life of the great summer-day,
And turn'd them into melodies, that made
The quiet place a temple of delight,
And told each other all things new and strange.
Freshness, and odours of the confluent breath
Of unseen blooms, flow'd round them everywhere.
Sometimes a gust shook all the place, and swell'd
The whispering of the little waterfalls
Into a stormy symphony, that drown'd
Their trebles and soft flutings ; and the doves
Ceased plaining, and the golden oriole
Flew out into the sun ; blue kingfishers

Forgot their blue forget-me-nots, and hid
Behind the mossed stones and hollow banks.
But thro' the winds and waters might be heard
The fearless nightingale, who all day long
Ceased not his songs, and loved to think it night
In that ambrosial twilight. "Here," she said,
"I charm'd the hearts of all my feather'd friends ;
First with a song, unheard till then by all
The thousand songbirds ; and their tongues abash'd
Grew silent ; then I mock'd their divers notes
So feately, I became a bird to them.
And by and by they flitter'd nearer to me,
And nearer daily, till their fears were changed
To wonder and to love, and they came nigh,
First perching on the low sprays overhead,
Then swinging on the rose-briers close at hand,
Then circling round my temples, and at last
Daring to touch my hand, and set themselves
A-singing 'mid my curls ; and where I went
They went ; and often, as I stept from out
The embowering shades into the sunny day,
Out rush'd my warblers, like a little cloud,
Piping their breezy welcomes all together."
Then, with a tender smile, like a sunbeam
Across an April shower, softly she said ;
"Oh, if I were a God, my sport should be
Only to make hearts glad. Methinks man's wisdom
Further and further puts him off from heaven
And independence ; children are likest gods

In their delights and innocence ; when I was
A child, my pleasure was to purchase pleasure
By giving it, and if I could not find
Love for my love, a smile to answer mine,
I sought to pass my leisure with fond things,
That without speech communicate their thoughts,
And always tell the truth. I fed the birds,
That flock'd from out a leafless wood hard by,
With sweets from mine own hand ; daily they came
At morn and even answering to my call.

Methought it was delight enough, 'twas godlike
To tame those winged creatures, and to make
Myself their hope, and object of their care,
Who cared for them ! Thou seest I am not changed
In outward seeming, for my little ones,
My winged lieges are most loving still,
And all-obedient ; oh I would not live
To be a bloodless image of myself.

Oh perish memory, rather than remember
The spotless days of childhood, but as pictures
That show me what I am not any more ! ”

And then she piped some notes they understood,
And straightway flock'd to her from far and near
The glad, wild creatures. Some in circles spun,
And cheep'd, and twitter'd round her brow ; and some,
Bolder by use, preen'd themselves on her head,
Or tangled their free wings among her curls ;
And their swift glancing motions shed the light
From off them in all colours ; and she laugh'd,

And darted off into a thicket near
Till they had fled ; then turn'd again, and said,
“Thou hast well seen my power to win wild birds ;
I have a pleasant tale to tell thee now,
How I have a power to scare wild birds away.

VIII

“This very morn, about the break of day,
When dreams are true, 'tis said, I dreamt a dream.
Methought my wooers by some fickle chance,
Ill for them, good for me, came all together.
I laugh'd within, the while I held to them
My outward aspect of staid courtesy.
And, as they turn'd their eyes on one another,
They frown'd at first, but, after, they put out
A sudden radiance of well-feigned mirth,
And each put on his softest mood and smiled.
‘May the Gods bless this gathering,’ said the priest,
‘And breathe us pregnant thoughts, and pleasant speech,
As the sweet sunshine over us draws out
The little seedling, hidden in the earth,
And the full fragrance of the open flower.’
‘We thank thee, holy sir,’ the lawyer said ;
‘How shall we laud enough the words of one
Who wafts to man on earth the will of heaven ?’
‘How can we thank thee, sir,’ the priest replied,
‘For the rare wisdom, that hath pour'd that will
Thro’ divers channels into daily use,

As one may sluice the common rain of heaven
Thro' many rills to feed the thirsty earth ?'

'But how may we praise him who makes no boast,
Save that he lives but for his country's sake,
And loves to die that she may better live,
And lends his strength to save the weak, and arms
To rescue captives, and avenge the fallen ?'

Said both, and bent toward the man of arms.
Then all together with one voice they cried,
Looking toward the mariner ; 'Who is he
Can be compared with one who links all lands
Together in his person ; pours the wealth
Of every clime into his own ; and tells
In his own tale the story of the world ?'

But, while they thus discoursed, I stole away,
And ran along a green walk full of glee,
And laughing to myself, and, as I turn'd,
Hoping to hide me in another walk,
I met the cat-like lawyer face to face,
Bowing his bent back till it grew a hunch ;
He show'd me parchments scrawl'd with endless phrase
Against which armour not a host would stand,
And all the arrows of the evil fail,
Would I but take him with them—that was all.

'Forbear,' I cried, 'my friend, for it is vain ;
Thou hast a foe—that mighty man of war—
And he hath sworn that if I wed not him
Or any other—but most surely thee—
For artless strength loathes ever strengthless art—

To take my land, and hold it by the sword,
And rend thy sheepskins, and then flay thyself ;
And see ! he comes' ; the lawyer sneak'd away.
Up came the modest soldier to my side,
And there and then—his hand upon his heart—
With vailed crest, but in a warlike bass,
Offer'd himself and valour for my good,—
My lifelong good—all for my little hand.
'Forbear,' I cried, 'my friend, for it is vain.
Thou hast three foes—for those three foes are mine—
Each hath a separate power to do me hurt,
And take away my riches if he will ;
And each hath threaten'd in his turn to use it,
Should I not wed him, or wed any other.
Should the proud priest perceive that thou hast won,
His powerful curse, with which he threatens me,
Would dry up all this land, and make me poor ;
And see ! he comes !' The soldier took to flight.
Then the priest, bending low, and smiling sweet,
Promised me all things with the love of Heaven,
If I were his, if I were only his.
'Forbear,' I cried, 'my friend, for it is vain ;
Should man of law perceive that thou hast won,
He would weave round me such a fatal web—
And this he threatens—as would leave me nought,
For all my goods would pass away from me
Through his arch-juggling fingers unto others ;
And lo ! he comes !' and the priest turn'd his heel.
And after him the jovial seaman join'd,

And promised me a fresh tale every night,
So that our lives should ebb as stealthily
As the slow-sinking waves of falling tides,
That, as we watch them, seem to come again
To the same spot, and with the selfsame sound.
'Forbear,' I cried, 'my friend, for it is vain ;
The priest, the lawyer, and the man of war
Have been before thee—them I have denied—
And they are sworn to be avenged on me !
Thou art one simple seaman—nothing more—
How wilt thou strive against the Cerberus
Of threefold hate ? the curse, the craft, the sword ?
The priest would curse thee, and the soldier slay,
If we were wed ; the priest would blight my lands,
The lawyer net them, and the soldier spoil ;
Thou wouldest be slain, a victim for my sake ;
And I should be a beggar all thro' thee !'
As tho' a thunderclap had smote his ear,
He started, and pass'd dolefully away.
Such was my dream, and so, this very morn
Faithful to it, as to an oracle,
I bad my lovers part and come no more.
And now fresh sorrow shadows me ; until
I knew that thou art mine, as I am thine,
Beloved one, my fears were for myself,
As now they are for thee, and tenfold more ;
The love that goes forth for another's sake
Leaves self-love cold beside her quenched hearth,
And I am fearless for myself, tho' frail.

I seem a champion arm'd in perfect mail,
And, standing over thee, I throw them all
My worthless wealth, as to the hungry wolves,
Across thy body. Oh ! this too weak heart,
That trembled at imaginings of ill,
Is proof against the real. I love thee so,
That I could bear, methinks, without a sigh
The knotted blows of their contorted hates,
So I might stand a shield 'twixt them and thee ;
Not that thy strength hath need of this weak hand,
Or I could save thee from thine enemies ;
Oh ! I am dreaming." Here she ceased, and wept.
" What have I done that the great Gods should make
My youth, my happy days, my paradise,
The sources of my sorrows and my fears,
The outward mockeries of mine inner woe ?
Oh let me fly from treacherous shows, and leave
This direful happy land, and leave it theirs,
Who covet it, to strive for ; so their hates
Of one another shall avenge my wrongs.
Better the shelter of a desert rock,
Where our sole garden should be in our hearts,
And Love and Truth like rose-trees interwined,
Shall bear the two rare blossoms, peace and joy ! "

IX

And, when the wondrous tale was ended all,
What seized the youth that he blazed forth at once

In quenchless laughter? "Art thou mad?" she cried ;
"For solemn things that move my tears can stir
Thy merriment, as though a child should take
The wrinkled brow and twisted lips of pain
For laughter, and so laugh?" He said, "Dear girl ;
Pardon this seeming ribald mood, this trance
Of unresisted mirth ; but thou, ere long,
Shall join myself in mocking at thyself."
No sooner said than he leapt up, and fled
Into the nearest thicket, and came forth,
After a moment, bearing a vine-stem,
Wherefrom the four sad scorned lovers hung,
Disconsolate, but now, now truly dead.
And, tho' the dead men were a dreadful sight,
Arguing more dreadful deed, the boy once more
Burst out in peals of maddest mirth ; till, she
Turning to flee, he cast them to the earth,
And running after bad her turn and see.
Palely she look'd up to him, as tho' scared
At his strange motions and his idiot glee.
"Come now," he said, "and look upon thy foes."
Fearfully then she follow'd him, afraid
Lest he, her love, were wicked or a fool,
And, looking down upon the turf, she cried—
Now spurring his wild laughter with her own—
"O Nemesis! is this thy work indeed?
Nothing I see but loose habiliments,
Empty of man ; but, tell me, I pray thee, where
Are the good men who dwelt erewhile in them?"

" Dear girl," he answered : " these are all of man
That ever troubled thee with love or lies.
And, had they been possess'd of human forms,
Still would my words be true and fit for them.
For when the heart of truth is not within,
The outward vesture is the whole of man
Seen by his fellow ; wouldest thou better know
Where they are fled, thou needst but look on me,
While I put on the priestly stole and beard,
And with false hair a little streak'd with grey
Speak in a feigned voice, which art I learnt
Right early, as I mimick'd the woodbirds,
While wandering in the forest whole days long,
And then to ape my little friends at school.
So with the soldier, and the man of law,
And with the merchant." " Art thou all ?" she cried.
" Hast thou fill'd singly all these many parts ?"
" Listen," he said ; " I knew that what hath been
Might be again, and that the bitter world
Might work thee ill, unless I dealt with it ;
So what might be, dear girl, I made to be.
Thou hast affronted perils that I fear'd
In seeming to affront them, and hast won
A victory over them ere they appear ;
And, had I not thy heart, as thou hast mine,
Still would I fear no danger to that heart,
Though I were wandering in a distant land
And saw thee not ; fenced by experience
Thou still wert safe, but, arm'd by love, secure :

Were I far off, I should have left thee thus
Shielded against the soldier's ringing brass,
And countercharm'd against the ghostly priest,
Sheepskinn'd against the subtle man of law,
And deafen'd to the merchant's thousand tales."

X

When he had ceased, she sat a moment still,
And turn'd away her face, as one who saw
Some far-off motion, or would sound the clouds,
Or pierce the mountains. Soon an angry shame
Flush'd cheek and forehead, and she turn'd and said,
"Say, was the aged mother whom I lov'd
And trusted, but the last act of thy play,
The best of thy disguises? Yes, methinks,
I saw the selfsame features, as she sat
'Mid evening shadows, and but dimly seen
Under the glooming umbrage. If 'twere so,
Thou hast been, boy, too venturous; 'twas too much,
That I should lean my sorrows on thy breast
Deeming it hers; that thou, too daring one,
Shouldst steal me from myself, and my resolves,
Albeit unwitting, into such frail acts
As show unseemly in the light of truth,
Whereof no maiden pardons to herself,
Tho' guiltless, ev'n the memory; was it so?"
"Fear not," he answer'd, "then should I have been
Loveless, as all the others; for true love

Loves best to crown the idol of his heart
With dream-perfection. Had I snared thee thus,
It would have been as though a wanton boy
Should smirch the dewy fruitage with rough hand,
For pastime should tear off the wild-bird's plumes,
Whose feathers glancing in free light and air
Are magically hued, but once pluckt off
Can be no more restored. He stands apart,
Gazing upon its beauty, as a work
Divinely wrought, but not for him, and so
He dares possess it with his eyes alone,
Nor with a touch or breath unsanctify it.
She is my mother's mother, as I said,
And will rejoice, O love, to see this day.”
Again she look'd upon him, her sweet face
Sadden'd again a little, and she said :
“ There is one other thing I still would know ;
Wherefore, if thou art noble, as I hear,
In name, and nobler, as I hoped, in heart,
Didst thou, in guise of priestly raiment, dare
To lock me up in that enchanted sleep,
That leaves us helpless, and, tho' living still,
Deaf to this world and blind ; as I have heard
The stoled guardians of the sacred shrines,
Ministers of the holy oracles,
’Tis said, themselves are wont to do ? Didst thou
Seek to know if the hosts of other lands
Are arming silently ? Where vanish'd wealth
Is treasured ? Whence a sudden plague shall swoop

Upon this realm? Or if some tyrant, swoln
With adulation, or on fire with pride,
Shall perish in his madness, if he rides
Beyond his city gates to win the world?"
"None of these things," he answer'd, "have I sought.
But, O beloved, I have heard it said
By a wise man from Egypt, who had fill'd
His spirit with all knowledge, and had heard
Whispers, 'twas said, from other worlds, and seen
Their habitants pass by him as he lay
With open eyes, and visions in his sleep
When voices, speaking to him, as of men,
Told him celestial secrets, and the use
Of secret charms on earth, to sound the mind
And heart of others. For he arm'd himself
Against such perilous ventures by long fast
And solitary prayer. And I have known,"
He said, "a lover shadow'd by despair
Lay in a trance the maiden whom he loved,
But she had scorn'd him—for her pride was great,
And he was lowly-born—but when she spoke
Out of her inward life—her natural sight
And hearing vanish'd, and her body stretch'd
In death-like palsy—'twas with other words.
All the sweet utterances the hapless boy
Imagined in wild dreams that flatter'd him ;
All the kind looks he treasured in his heart,
Remembering how beautiful she was,
When he had seen her smile on other men ;

Became now real to him as he sat
And spoke to her ; and she, in accents changed,
Named him her first, her only love, her life.
And so he won her, slowly turning all
Her outward semblance of disdain to truth
Of love at last—by might of steadfast will—
Till she was powerless to withhold the thoughts
That she had bound till then in chains of pride.
And so I hoped to charm from thee, O love,
In charming words, the secret of thy soul,
If that should be as I had dreamt it was.
But all is over now, and those dear lips
Have told me freely all I sought to know ;
Those eyes awake have seen me by thy side,
And seen me take thy hand, as I do now.”

XI

“I trust myself to thee, and to thy love,”
She softly answer’d, “and thy youthful arm.
Yet tho’ my cares, like mists at morn, are fled,
Still do their pulses shake me, and I seem
As one awaken’d who can scarcely trust
’Twas all a dream. Think what it was to be
A lone maid loving, loving to be loved,
Yet woo’d by loveless lovers, who would slay
Her whom they woo’d, might they but win her place,
Each other in that self-love which is hate.
Think what it was to have my ears and heart

Assail'd by silver speech and blandishments,
And so to know that I must arm myself,
Like Artemis, or Pallas, to be true
Unto myself, tho' seeing, as I could see,
With natural maiden instinct, through all
Their dark-woven corselets of hypocrisy,
As tho' they were transparent. Oh ! to be
Daily in peril, as a frightened bird
That fear charms slowly to the serpent's mouth :
Daily in peril, like a citadel
Starved in a siege, and drawn to its surrender
For lack of that true bread which thou hast brought,
Possessing which, I fear not all strong arms,
All crafty arts ; nor soldier, lawyer, priest,
Or merchant ; let them flatter, let them threat.
With thee, with thee ! "—And here her happy eyes
Gazed on him, as Andromeda on him
Who with heroic heart and stalwart arm
Unbound her from the rock, and from the fear
Of the sea-monster. After that sweet smile
There burst a storm of happy tears, wrung out
From the long-gathering clouds of daily care,
The thunder-shower that clear'd her troubled soul,
And she sank down upon his breast in peace.
And then she pour'd into his loving heart
The music of her own, the secret joys,
Hidden like pearls in caskets, which she fear'd
To look on, ev'n in secret, lest some thief
Should come nigh, and should steal them, and make
known

The priceless treasure ; all the summer dreams,
That, through her open lattice, lighted down
Upon her moonlit loveliness, in nights
Gone by, when she had left the garden walks
At sundown, and had sought her chamber dim,
And lay as one entranced, her lips apart,
And one white arm beneath dark tresses drown'd,
In blissful slumber ; and the world without
Slept all in starry stillness, but the song
Of nightingales that answer'd one another ;
The far-off waterfall, the moaning pine ;
And such weird whispers in the thrilling air
As seem the tongues of watchful spirits ; all
Mingled together in her happy swoon.
And one came down thro' the ambrosial gloom
Looking upon her with soft eyes like his.
She told him all the sweet moods she had seem'd
To mask in prideful accents or in frowns ;
The many tears that she had shed, to think
That her poor fence might kill the love she craved
And dared not compass ; and the golden hopes
Of blessed days to come, dear to the heart
As those rose-hues and many-colour'd fires
That light a summer-eve, when thundrous clouds
Are banded eastward, and the promise shines
Of many glorious morrows of bright morns.
When she had finish'd her sweet words, they sat
Down on a turf-seat under low, dark boughs
Of cedar, and he took her by the hand,

And said ; " Dear love, when I look on this land
Of flowers, and ever-fruitful pleasures,
Comes memory of strange things that I have heard
Ev'n from the lips of one whom thou hast spurn'd—
That merchant—who had measured sea and land !—
Yet was he more deserving than the rest,
For with the wildest fables he could mix
Things true, tho' wilder than his phantasies.
And once—it was a dusky eve, and clouds
Roll'd eastward, threatening change, and a black night
Of tempest, and the waves began to wail,
And whiten underneath the thundrous pall,
And the hot sands were whirl'd into the air,
And the shrill gusts bent low the tamarisks—
'Twas then he leant toward me, and he laid
His hand upon my arm, and in his eyes
There shone a fire I had not seen before.
His tones were mournful, and his trembling lips
Grew pale, as if some weird, unutterable,
And ghostly memories from within him drove
All lighter legends and all jocund tales.
As thus he whisper'd to me, ' O my friend,
Hast never dreamt of the Hesperian isles,
The blessed isles, delightsome, which the Gods,
Some say, once made their dwelling in the dawn
Of years, and left them to the sons of men,
Elysiums of Nature ? Once I heard
My grandsire—he too was a mariner bold
From whom my love of the blue water flow'd—

Tell of a voyage which he once had made
In his brave youth. His voice shook, as he said :
' My child, the thoughts of the fair land I saw,
The memories of the solemn tale I heard,
Live in me yet, tho' many cares, and pains,
That since have troubled me, are swallow'd up,
And all forgotten ; but these memories
Come back to me in the night-watches still,
And seem to scroll the darkness. O my boy,
I speak not now of present times, my own
Slight ventures ; and I add not my own words
To those that I have heard, for they are true.'

ATLANTIS

PART I

I

“ WE sail’d beyond the great gates of the World,
That shut in all we know,—into the Deep
Unknown ; and on and on, by day and night,
We fled along the unruffled Ocean-floor,
Borne by light, happy winds, till hope began
To freeze to fear ; for there was ne’er a change,
Nor rock, nor isle, to speck the azure vast,
That with the blue heaven made a single orb
Unfathomable, above us and below.
Our men cried, ‘ Whither wend we ? ’ and began
To whisper, and to mutter, and to snarl.
Methought they yearn’d to fling me to the sharks
And krakens ; but I said, ‘ Have patience yet
A single day, and bear with me, for I
Have mystic warrant for the things I do.
I saw in dream a land that none have seen.
A voice said, ‘ Seven days’ sail shall bring thee there ’ ;
And this is but the sixth.’ They scowl’d on me ;
And ‘ If another morn,’ said one, ‘ shall break
Without thy dream’s fulfilment’—as he spake,

The wind blew fresher, and the ship sped on.
I rose, and pointed with my trembling hand
To where at intervals a mountain-peak
Clave the far-rolling purple, and shone out
Brighter with every moment, as we glanced
Along the seas: and then a shout arose,
And all hands to their travail turn'd again
With an obedient awe, and better will.

The seventh day all the day we sail'd, till eve
Flush'd the grey main, and, at the set of sun,
Over the waves that roll'd into the flame
Of the wide West, I saw an island lone
Far off grow dark against the flood and fire,
Like some great battle tower. There lay a cloud
Upon its topmost summit, burning red,
That seem'd a giant with uplifted arms;
He seem'd to blow a trumpet from on high,
And wave a banner. On the morrow morn,
The morning of the eighth day, at the dawn,
Were we spellbound, or did a choral strain,
Solemn and sweet, float to us o'er the sea,
As tho' the guardian spirits of the place
Had bad us welcome to it? On we fared
Nearer and nearer to that nameless isle:
And now we saw its beauty waken up
With every moment, and our gladness rose.
On either hand seashore, with gardens back'd,
And high with plumed forests, higher still
With silver mountain thrones that turn'd to gold

At the first sunburst ; and, midway between
The shores and woods, a piled city ranged,
Terrace on terrace, citadel and tower,
And dome and pinnacle ; soft shadows fell
From summer clouds upon that happy realm,
Kissing the lights with coolness, and anon
Between them great shafts of translucent gold
Made the deep valleys and tall cliffs to burn
With gem-like clearness.

As we near'd the strand,
We saw the ramparts and the city-wall
Throng'd with the multitudes ; but not a voice
Clave the clear air ; and, when the anchor fell,
Two or three pass'd down to us with grave mien,
And eyes of wonder, and some words were spoken
In a strange speech ; and then they sign'd to one
Who stood apart, a man of stately build
And many years ; and with a peaceful smile
He bad us welcome, uttering friendly words
In the same tongue. I thought it strange at first ;
But, listening eagerly, it seem'd I heard
Some old old utterance of the golden notes
Of Hellas ; and, in hearing more and more,
I shaped the speaker's thought in antique words,
As one by gazing on a mother's face
Long lost may trace the semblance of his own.
And clearly and more clear, as he discoursed,
Rose the full stature of the archaic tongue,
Majestical, as are the massive girth,

And gnarled boughs, of some ancestral oak,
That far above the valley's leaves and streams
Murmurs apart, and whispers of the Past.
'Approach and fear not, whosoe'er thou art,
And whencesoe'er,' he said, 'and wonder not,
Tho' we must wonder ; for behold thou standest
On the last remnant of an ancient world,
That was the nurse of nations, ere the deep,
Like Death itself, in one night swallow'd it,
Hungrier than Death who leaves our bones entire,
It left no fragment but this lonely isle.
This dreadful doom I will relate to thee
Some time when I have shown thee other things.
I bid thee welcome ; 'tis a day foretold
By the old oracles whose voice I am,
Ministering in the temple night and day.
Thou art the man to whom the Gods have made
A way to us across the dreadful deep,
The first of all for many thousand years.
And, were it not that I am heir to them
From whom the nations flow'd, thou hadst not breathed
The spirit of my speech, nor I of thine ;
And thou hadst been, on these remotest shores,
As one who wanders down among the dead,
The silent shades ; but in the early time
Flocking from east and west, and north and south,
The sons and daughters of far hills and isles
Sought this world's paradise, Atlantis fair,
That lay where now the ruthless ocean rolls.

But since that day, when, looking towards the west,
We saw but the wild waters, toward the East,
And saw but the wild waters, none have dared
The angry deep to visit us, save one,
Like thee, a Greek, who, generations past,
Was cast by evil winds upon these shores,
And never parted more, but lived and died
Among us, and forgot his fatherland,
For love of the sweet refuge he had found ;
And sons and daughters were born to him here.
One of his kindred is among us still ;
Though ages are roll'd by, he hath not yet
Forgot their tongue and thine, and he may well
Serve as interpreter 'twixt thee and us.
No islander of ours hath found his way
To other shores ; ah me ! we know not aught
Who once knew all things ; we who had all powers
And blisses of the earth are smitten down ;
Nor know we if the whole world, like our own,
Hath perish'd in the waters. In old time
Our fleets went outward, freighted with our wealth,
Our sons and daughters with them, and all lands
Owe life to ours. I know not whence thou art ;
But this I know, that thy melodious tongue
Sure is the tender offspring of our own.'

II

"While yet he spoke a herald cross'd the way,
And bad us to the regal banquet-chamber.

And soon we mounted by a marble stair
Up to the palace of the living King,
The last of the Atlantes, heritor
Of that one island, the fair jewel left
To witness to past riches, heritor
Of silent memories, whose dim twilights cast
All actual into darkness. He rose up
To bid us welcome, and the guests came in,
And took their places ; to the foremost seats
We were led up by silent seneschals.
From unseen alcoves rose the sound of harps
And voices in low-breathed harmonies,
That, from the shadows, reach'd us, sad and sweet,
And seem'd to swoon as tenderly away,
As summer seas that fall along the shore
Thro' silvery whispers into silences ;
As memories dying back thro' sumless years.
The carven vessels on the banquet-table
Were wrought in weird, sweet fashions ; and the shapes,
Crusting the gold and silver, show'd us things
We fondly dreamt of as Hellenic lore,
Hellenic poesy, Hellenic art ;
And yet were older than our race entire,
Dating from dimmest æons of the dawn
Of very Time itself. All I beheld
Showed me the might and magistery of men,
The vanished ancestors of those I saw.
The sculptures set in niche or pedestal ;
The pictured phantasies along the walls ;

The wreathen scroll-work on the roof, afire
With rainbow colours, and the writhen gold
Of the tall urns and jewell'd chalices ;
The musical sweet voices of the singers,
Who sang the songs of ages that had reap'd
The harvest of all good things long ago ;
The unknown instruments, of gracious mould,
For wind or string ; all round me made me feel
Like some hoar patriarch of an hundred years,
Whose soul is dark to all beyond the day,
When for a moment memory glances forth,
Like a last glory from the setting sun
Firing the peaks of snow, and shows him deeds
Done in the warlike prowess of his youth ;
He starts, and weeps, and wonders at himself,
And sighs that all is fled for ever by,
All but his weary frame and vain regrets.
And when the cupbearers with silent grace
Bore round in graven ewers the bright blood
Of island vintages, long hid away
In sunless grots, until the prison'd fires,
As 'twere rejoicing in their freedom, leapt
Out of long years of darkness into day,
And gave the sun back all its stolen gold,
Methought the fragrance of the amber drops,
And purple, rose up in my sense, like steam
Of orient mists shot thro' with sparks of dawn
Innumerable, and thro' my heart and brain
Wander'd sweet phantoms, born of the delight

Of that old wine breathing of paradises,
And the first world of loving hearts and free.

III

"And when the feast was ended, and the hearts
Of men wax'd jocund with the golden wine,
The heir of the Atlantes, with a smile
Bending toward my grandsire : 'Stranger, speak ;
All other tongues will hush ; I pray thee speak
Of that thou knowest, and hast seen ; for we
Are lost to space and time since that great day.
And if a winged messenger came down
From the Immortals, he were not more rare
Than thou art fresh from the great outer world.'
'O King,' he answer'd, 'it would fill the days,
And months, and years of yet another life
As long as mine lived back into the past,
If I should tell thee all the marvellous things
That I have mark'd since boyhood. Then I spake,'
My grandsire said, 'of all my busy life,
My many wanderings by land and sea,
Thro' Persia, Egypt, Araby and Ind ;
Of Scythian ruins, seeming old as time,
Of many tongues, whose diverse utterance raised
Barriers 'twixt race and race, and man and man.
And then he show'd me how the differing forms
Of this diversity were but the strands
Of the one cable anchor'd in the deeps
Of fathomless antiquity ; once more

He show'd me how to wind the scatter'd threads
Into the primal unity. And once,
Spurr'd on by busy cares of life, I said,
I went down into Egypt, and I saw
Mysterious, imperishable stones
Of structures, older than all memories
Of generations of the living race
Of mortal men, whereof no record lived
In scroll or legend.' With astonished eyes
King Atlas said, "'Tis ev'n as I had dreamt.
Thy memory pictures to me the old land
In its first beauty ; all that thou hast seen
Of regal structure, pillar'd temple, tomb
Pyramidal, is but the shadow cast
From the old world, how fair soe'er they seem.
And if the spirit of thine Hellas wrought
The thoughts, inherited thro' countless years,
Into all lovely fashions, 'twas no more
Than the first instincts breath'd from sire to son,
Of the first generations ; nay far less,
And ever dimmer, as the interval
'Twixt past and present widen'd thro' the years ;
And only then to be reborn in full
Perfection of their beauty, when the days
Of these sad years of lamentation cease ;
When the great manhood of the world shall come,
Crown'd with that glory, which the Gods shall give,
Unknown to all the ages that have been.
In thy discourse, methinks, I meet again

Mine ancestry, whose noble land was lost
These many thousand years, the self-same race,
Whose mighty deeds are chanted by us yet
In this lone isle, the only remnant left
To witness for the truth of the great days.
Oh ! when I hear thy voice, I feel as they
Who pass thro' some far city they have dreamt
Long years before, and now remember nought,
But know they look on a familiar thing.'

Again my grandsire spake before the King :
' And when I saw the proud Egyptian Lords,
And the high chief of armies, and the first
In council, and the women wise and fair,
I spoke to them of Athens, Corinth, Thebes,
Bright eyes of Hellas, and of our renown.
They said, ' A greater Athens stood where now
She stands, a people wiser than ye are,
Who boast yourselves supreme ; and, where the proud
Acropolis looks over the blue sea,
A fairer city shone, whose noble sons
Seem'd very Gods on earth—so moulded they,
So dower'd with mind—each brotherhood in arts
Or arms wrought earnestly, and with that love
That grows perfection ; their heroic men
Subdued the nations, and their wisdom ruled ;
Their priests of holy things, their ministers
Of justice, and their lawgivers were fill'd
With the pure spirit of truth.' ' I wonder not,'
King Atlas said, ' for when the land, that sank

Beneath the waters, was the chief on earth,
Great hosts went out from it, and fill'd the earth
Eastward ; thine ancestors were sons of ours.'
My grandsire said, 'The Egyptians told me this,—
Alas ! 'tis sad, yet vain, to think of it—
That foremost race, the cities of that time,
The primal Athens with its glory fell
The selfsame hour when earthquake, storm, and sea
Bore down the great Atlantis.' He replied,
'Oh thou art from the remnant that escaped
When desolations at the fated time
Wasted these regions, and thy fatherland.'
'They told me also this,' my grandsire said,
'Of old, where now the long Piræus runs
Down to the waters, only fishers' huts
Stood on the shore beside their little barks ;
Upon the heights the shepherd's tent, and flock.'
King Atlas said, 'We knew not if thy land
Were desolate, or still inhabited ;
For, since the doom that swallow'd up our world,
The sons of the first race, whom thou hast found
Dwelling in this far isle, are drown'd in night,
As their forefathers in the flood ; since then
All things are hid from us, the world is lost ;
No voice from it hath reach'd us o'er the seas ;
No living sign hath pass'd from us to them.
But now I know thou art a brother, saved
From the great wreck, as we are ; and thy tongue,
Tho' varied, claims a kinship unto ours.'

IV

" He ended, and tumultuous voices rose.
And, when they ceased, the monarch raised his hand,
And call'd upon his chief of bards, a man
Who seem'd to press beneath his breast and brows
Secrets of the old cycles, ere the lights
Of other lands were kindled, that are now
The world's great capitals ; and he began
In tones not low nor loud, that struck the ear,
As twilight strikes the eye when the full moon
Rises at sunset, and the air is still
And shadowless, a tender, tuneful voice,
Wherein were mingled solemn things and sweet,
That won as with a charm the sense and soul.
' Of old, when the great Gods who rule the Earth
Shared it between them without strife, the King
Of Waters, Poseidaon, throned himself
Upon the blest Atlantis, now no more,
All but this little remnant, this lone isle,
And took unto himself a bride, among
The fairest of men's daughters. On a mount,
That dropt with gentle slope toward the plain,
Like which no garden out of all the earth
Was ever seen for beauty, Evenor dwelt,
And Leucippe his wife, and their one child
Fair Clito, fairest among women. He,
The monarch of the waters, look'd on her,
And loved her, and he took her for his bride,

Her parents dying ; and he fenced the mount,
And circled it with zones of land and sea,
Three zones of water, and two zones of land
Alternately, each separate from each
By equal spaces, that this realm might be
For ever unassailable by man ;
For in that day no ship with sail or oar
Breasted the seas. He by his godlike power
Made all things round about him beautiful.
He bad, and lo ! twin fountains sprang to life
Out of the centre of the pleasant land,
Tepid, and cold, and breathed fertility
On hill and valley ; all fair fruits, that serve
For uses and delights, boon Nature shower'd
From lavish horn. Four sons the Monarch had,
And by division of the realm entire
Into ten portions, he bestow'd on him,
Who was the firstborn, all his mother own'd,
The largest and the best, and made him king
Over the others who were also chiefs,
Each o'er a noble race and godly realm.
He gave them names ; the eldest, Atlas, gave
His to the whole Atlantis ; to the rest,
Who were born after, for their shares he gave
The regions lying eastward, toward the gates
And pillars of Alcides ; this lone isle,
Last fragment of a world-wide continent,
Which thou hast reach'd, lies midway 'twixt the East
And further West ; and here, it seems, was raised

The central city of the sunken world ;
For the vast ruins and the scatter'd piles
Of the old temples tell of its renown.
All these, for æons kings of land and sea,
Thro' many generations spread their rule
Far ev'n as Egypt and Tyrrhenia ;
But he named Atlas was the king of kings,
The Atlantis race the foremost. Each king left
His sceptre to his firstborn, as at first.
Each piled up such wealth as in other lands
Was heretofore unknown, perchance henceforth
Shall never be again. All goods of life,
Such as great cities boast of, or elsewhere
Are gather'd, were brought to them, and their power
Served them to reach the riches of far shores.
But most their pleasant birthplace minister'd,
Ores of all metals cavern'd in the earth,
And orichalcum precious next to gold ;
All woods that serve for house-work ; food of beasts
Both tame and wild, for those that dwelt by pools
And lakes, on hill and plain, and lord of all
The surging elephant ; all fragrant plants,
Which the earth bears to-day, or roots, or herbs,
Rare barks, or weeping odorous gums ; all fruits,
And flowers ; and such rare sweets as are the charm
Of banquet-tables ; syrups for the sick ;
All these grew up beneath the blissful breath
Of that one clime ; lovely, and wonderful,
And inexhaustible ! They saw the wealth

Of that great country, and began to build
Cities with ports, temples, and palaces,
Throughout the land ; the imperial capital
Shone on this island's western side, not here
Where this poor shadow-city, yearly less,
Dies of old age ; while the great vanish'd one,
After its countless ages, wax'd in strength
And beauty ; thither thou shalt go with me,
And I will show thee where, in ancient time,
Bridges had spann'd the water-zones, and link'd
The sea and land together, till the heights
Of the Acropolis and palace courts
Had seaward issues. The imperial house
Grew out of the first temple of the God ;
Each king received it from his ancestor,
And, piling it with riches, and with arts,
Each left the structure nobler than he found.
Out of the sea they led a watercourse
A hundred feet in depth, three furlongs wide,
That, from the inmost city, reach'd unto
The utmost zone of waters, which became
A haven opening seaward, space enough
To harbour lordliest vessels. All about
The city ran a wall of rock-hewn stones,
With towers and gates at intervals ; along
The bridges curving o'er the water-zones.
'Twas a strange sight to see the city then,
With its tall fanes of mingled marbles wrought ;
Its zones, and its imperial palace heights ;

Its gates, and towers, and temples ; and to see
Its bridges raying seaward, and its walls
Dazzling with plates of brass towards the main,
And, toward the land, with fair white metal arm'd ;
And all the walls of the Acropolis
Blazing with orichalcum in the sun !
Upon a central summit, high above
The circling capital, the palace stood,
Still from the western heights it may be seen
Midsea, a solitary witness left
To the first God-built city ; its tall crest
Rugged, and shatter'd by the hand of Time,
Once lifted up its pinnacles of gold.
Right in the midst a temple, dedicate
To Clito and Poseidon, stood inwall'd
Within a golden circle ; here were born
The first ten kings ; here were the offerings brought,
Gather'd from the ten fair provinces,
And sacrificed to them. Three furlongs deep
The temple stood, three plethra broad, in height
Proportional, and shadow'd all the place
With its vast spaces and barbaric state.
All the outer faces of the fane
Were laid with silver, but the pinnacles
Were golden ; and, within, the domed roof
Was wrought with ivory carved work, inlaid
With gold and orichalcum ; all the parts,
Walls, pillars, pavements, glisten'd with the same.
Within were golden statues ; first the God

Himself, aloft in wondrous chariot drawn
By six wing'd horses, held the reins, and reach'd
With his great stature to the roof itself ;
And round him sea-nymphs on their dolphins rode,
A hundred Nereids ; other sculptures shone
Raised to the memory of heroic men.
Outside the temple golden images
Of all the race descended from the king,
Both male and female ; famous citizens,
And names of honour out of other lands.
Then the great altar, wrought with precious art,
Equal in size and beauty to the rest.
So the vast palace, with its temple, seem'd
A symbol of the glory and the power
Of that old empire God-inherited !'

V

" He ceased ; and then the monarch Atlas turn'd
To the grave priest, his guide, ' O father, speak,
And let this stranger hear what thou hast heard,
Hear things, of this, and yet beyond, this world ;
Such rare realities, if they be real,
As seem like dream.' ' O King,' the priest replied,
' Thou bid'st me tell again of that drear night.
I sorrow to relate, yet will obey.
Once, as I mused upon that dreadful time,
When all the glory of a godlike race,
The treasures of a nation, first of men,

With all its crested cities, hills, and vales,
Forests, and fields, and gardens, sank beneath
Deep waters, all that Time had built with care
For ever vanish'd in one single night,
I marvell'd and I said unto myself,
'Can such things be, and the great God of Gods
Look on, and say 'tis well?' Who, think ye, first
Made answer to my musings? He alone,
The King of Kings, who was the last to part,
Came back the first, and told me of these things.
The ancient spirit from the other world
Spoke thro' the voice of an entranced maid,
As I served in the temple on that day.
For know, my son, the wise, from eldest time,
From unrecorded years of the world's prime,
Inherit magic arts, and power to charm,
Thro' might of fixed will, and waved arms,
The trembling framework of the delicate life
Of the pure-minded maid, or guileless boy,
To seeming death—for, if we will, the life
Comes, as it went—and when the body lies,
As tho' the spirit had departed thence,
That spirit rises into godlike strength,
And space and time fly from it, or the Gods
Utter their voices thro' the mortal tongue;
I know not which; and then oracular speech
Lays bare the past and future. On that day,
Methinks, no power had wrought the wondrous thing,
But the soul's self. I call'd to me a maid,

And laid her in that supernatural swoon,
Sleep likest death, that sets the spirits free,
With power to compass all things, and to range
From end to end of all this World, and leap
The walls of Time. I bad her call up one
Of the first Atlanteans—the great race
That pass'd away for ever—and he came.
Lo ! in a moment, the enchanted one
Lapsed into deep oblivion of this life,
Herself, and all around her, as one blind ;
And through the unconscious utterance spoke the King.
' Listen, O man : I am of those who saw
That night of desolations, and of doom,
When darkness in its folds wrapt up despairs,
And frantic fears, pierced by lamenting cries,
And cursings vain. On our primeval land
Its many peoples,—like the crowd that stand
Upon the deck of a becalmed bark,
And call unto the winds, tho' not a breath
Makes answer, and the helpless sails are still,
Till in a moment swoops the hurricane,
And the wild waters, and the end is come—
Its many peoples on that fatal night
Made merry, heedless of the morrow-morn.
The nation held its holiest festival ;
I was among the revellers, and with me
Were many guests. On high enthroned I sat,
I, of the stem of Atlas, king of kings,
Proud of my state, proud of my guests, myself,

And the high festival that gather'd us.
I call'd to the musicians, young and old,
The company of harpers with their harps,
The singing men, and singing maids ; and all
Timbrels, and flutes, and viols made a sound
Of gladness, and gave forth the hymned praise
Of our great country, foremost on the earth
For honour and for riches ; and I sat
High on my throne above the banquet-table,
The King of all that land. And, while I heard
The banded harmonies and voices roll
Delight, like sunlit waters, and the priest
Stood by the altar, and the flames went up,
And all the guests arose, and with a shout
Peal'd into the still darkness the vain words
'Long live the King of Kings,' and in my hands
I held the golden chalice wreathed with flowers,
Just as the triumph and the music ceased,
It seem'd an answer came from far below
Thro' the black night. Whether it was the sound
Of echoes doubling and redoubling still
From cliff and tower, or from the city cries
Of revelry, we knew not for a while.
But nearer, and still nearer rose the sound.
And now it was not music, or delight,
But horror mingled with astonishment,
And hopeless desolation. As I rose
In fear and in confusion, lo ! a tongue
Of fire leapt from the altar suddenly,

And cast a glare into the outer dark ;
And what was that we saw ? O holy Gods,
Though I be now crown'd with Elysian peace,
Immortal calm, and gladness undisturb'd,
Still does the memory of that night of fears
Come back to me, and shake me as at first,
For a brief moment, till the blessed sight
Of happy faces, that will change no more,
If not to added beauty, on whom death
No more can fall, and happy songs remove
The frightful shadows. What was it we saw
From our high palace on the central mount ?
Great Gods ! the flame-light show'd us but the last,
As 'twere the last uplifted, piteous arms
Of that great city, in its few tall towers
Still toppling o'er the flood, its terraces
Crowded with fearful, supplicating hosts,
Whose utter woe went up in one great cry
And then was silent ; for where they had been
The waters drawn in by the whirling gulph
Roll'd as a cataract, nearer to us, nearer.
The mountain summits far along the West,
Whereon the stars of old were wont to stay
In crowns of light, were sunk beyond our sight ;
And now the surging mountain waters took
The place of their old thrones. With mazed eyes
And moveless limbs we look'd upon the wreck
Of that great realm—as from a topmast looks
The captain of a ship, the last man left.

Upon the sinking vessel with its freight,
And gasping crew, knowing that he must be
With them a moment after—and the sound
Of the near waters show'd me I too, I
Was call'd to death. Into the royal halls
The stormy deluge burst at length, and quench'd
The golden lamps, and altar fires ; a noise
Roll'd like a circling thunder in mine ears,
Then dark, dark, dark ! I saw, I heard no more !
Next morn the dwellers in the farthest east,
The remnant isle that we inhabit now,
Look'd toward the west where they were wont to feast
Their eyes with this world's beauty to the full,
Bathe in deep shade of mountain purples, range
O'er rivers, widening from them, and behold
The far-off woodlands, bending silently
To the first airs, and trembling gold of dawn ;
And see the lordly city in the sun,
With all its sheeny towers, and arched zones,
And crested with its tall Acropolis,
Palace, and temple. And, as a man who lays
His trembling hand upon his open eyes,
Suddenly blinded—as though aught again
Could quicken the dead sense to living things—
So stared they, as tho' living eyes once more
Could quicken into being that dead world ;
Then shouted with dismay. And a great host,
Thousands of thousands, stood along the steeps,
Whence the old land was sever'd, looking down

Into the boiling gulphs far underneath,
That flung themselves against the marble walls,
As tho' to bid them follow ; and, across
The dreadful deeps, thenceforward nevermore
Rose pinnacle or tower above the sea.
Only, on summer days, when the blue plain
Is smooth as mountain tarn, and clear below,
As the blue air above or sapphire gem,
Some say the tall peaks of high mountains gleam,
Whereon once throned temples and palaces ;
Great hosts appear and vanish, and a sound
Of voices fainting through the dread abyss
Heard far and farther down, till all is still.'

VI

"The Highpriest paused awhile, then spoke again,
His solemn utterance deepen'd into awe.
'But, when I thought how wondrous was the work
Wrought in the spirit of a simple maid,
How straightway she became an oracle
Uttering unearthly voices, 'Sure,' I cried,
'If he who spake the awful words I heard
Be the last King of Kings, he lives, he lives !
Nothing is lost, though all things may be changed,
The mortal to immortal, dust and ash
Wherein we are imprison'd, and held down,
To light and liberty, the wings of life.
And, if they live, who perish'd in that night,

Will he not tell me of their present home,
And if they wander, as the poets say,
Starving on vain regrets, and tasting nought
But sapless memories, while they strive to mock
Their mortal triumphs, as a shadow does
The palm-tree that rejoices in the sun ?
So that the hapless poet faintly sings
To ghostly chords, that mimic his lost lyre
And tuneful voice, as a last echo gives
A trumpet sound ; the captain that led on
His thousands, runs on airy walls and towers
Thin as the vapours of a dream, and strikes
Upon phantasmal armour with a sword
Frail as an infant's fighting with a reed ;
The judge sets free his prisoner, or condemns,
Tho' nothing be arraign'd but empty air ;
The captive trembles, and the monarch nods,
Though each to each be nothing more than mist,
Or moonlight shaping shadows unto life.'

I was resolved ; again I call'd the maid.
I laid her in the supernatural swoon ;
I bad her call up him who came before ;
I bad her follow wheresoe'er he went.
Pale as the dead, and speechless for a while,
At length she utter'd with a fearful voice ;
'Oh ! what is this ? See ! I am rapt away,
I know not whither, on a boundless sea.
My little bark leaps o'er the snow-white crests
Of the great waves, as tho' the Gods themselves

Were wafting me far off from sight of shore
To show me a new world : how swift my flight !
My bark is drifted underneath the shade
Of old-world ruins, that, methinks, have been
Sometime a kingly palace. I see an arch
O'ershadowing, that opens far within
Thro' twilight into night ; the granite base
Of the tall pile, the very lowest towers
Above the highest watermark, and all
The fury of the stormwind and the sea
Roars underneath the giant walls above,
And scarce the spray spills on its marble floors,
For the stern buttress of the moveless rock
Flings the torn waters from it. Now I lie
On calmest azure, and the winds are still.
And, as I marvel musing on my state,
Right where the rocky platform slopes away
Toward the ocean, on the edge itself,
I see a shape, as of a crowned King,
Taller than mortal men. He makes a sign
That I should moor my shallop to the rock,
And mount to meet him—nay, I must obey—
For unimagined forces compass me,
And I am drawn against my strength and will
To stand before him, as a strengthless child.
The crowned giant turns to me, and smiles,
Fastening his eyes upon me ; and those eyes
Have such a potent magic that their glance
Informs me with his knowledge ; so I know

This is the skeleton of the great house
Of the Atlantean kings, whereof he was.
And now he shows me what to outward eyes
Was never seen ; for the old walls and floors
Are broken up ; the mountain, that sank down
With the first city, leaving only this,
Huge fragments of its once magnificence
Surmounting it down to this very day,
Is open'd to my view, becomes a stair
Descending to the earth beneath the sea.
He signs to me to follow him ; we pass
Under an archway, and his steps are swift,
Downward, it seems, for ever ; for the slope,
Methinks, sinks underneath the deep still seas,
Into such darkness as we dreamt not of,
Were it not that a light around him flows,
And shoots up from the starpoints of his crown.
And now my feet descend no more ; on, on,
I follow him thro' silent galleries
Hewn by the countless years and unseen powers
Out of the sunken mountain ; and we pass,
Thro' light like moonshine, o'er millennial floors,
As of an endless temple. And at first
I see not aught around me ; by and by
Behold gigantic circling halls, dim roofs
Fretted thro' cunning skill of hermit gnomes,
And set with precious gems of every hue,
That for a moment flash above my head
Like stars and fiery meteors ; and the breath

Of the seawaters, and the fairy touch
Of the light-finger'd sea-nymphs have inwrought
In the great walls—that seem as treasures piled,
Until they vanish in the gulphy glooms—
Things never seen upon the sunlit earth.
And our swift motion and the wavering light
Breed dismal shadows round me, that appear
Instinct with silent passions, anger, fear,
And sorrow ; and, methinks, they show me things
That once befell the ancient drowned race,
Phantoms that signal to me in dumb show.
I seem to see the earthborn giants loom,
Shaking their angry locks against the Gods.
Born between light and darkness suddenly
They vanish as a cloud. Far up I hear
Imprison'd winds, like sighs of weary ghosts,
Wandering for sunless æons thro' the night ;
Or was it the great deep that moans above
Heard in the silence ? Sometimes a sad form,
As of a mother weeping for her sons
Slain in her presence ; or a drowning child
Stretching its arms in vain ; but, as I gaze,
Ev'n in the act of vision they are lost,
And other shadows rise, and live, and die.
Onward we move, and though it be thro' gloom
Of utter night, I see the radiant sheen,
As of a lamp, from him who goes before,
The crowned one ; but lo ! the end is come.
I only see immeasurable height,

And breadth, a barrier of eternal rock,
Blackness of darkness ; but he lifts his hand ;
That wall is penetrable as the air.
He takes me by the hand, and we swim through
The shapeless mass, as though it were a cloud.
And now a change ! oh ! what a wondrous change !
It is another world beneath the sea.
My sight is dazed, as when the sun of morn
Bursts on a night of visions of despair.
We hear no more the thunder of the main
That rolls above, nor raving of the winds ;
The ocean is translucent as a gem,
Or drop of its own waters held in light,
Or so 'twould seem. I see the vanish'd land
That once stood on the waters, and went down
With all its hills and valleys. Hark ! he speaks,'
She said, 'the crowned one' ; and for a space
Her tongue was silent, then again she spake.
' It is King Atlas who is now my guide,
And he hath told me all things ' ; ' Here,' he said,
' We dwell in the old land that we had lost,
How strange soe'er it seem to thee, 'tis true.
The cities are rebuilt, the mountains stand
In sunshine, and the vintage on the slopes,
The harvest in the valleys. This fair realm
To which thy natural senses would be blind,
Ev'n couldst thou breathe and live beneath the sea,
Thy spirit looks on with its inner eyes.
The vast abysses, silent and unsunn'd,

Drew down into them all the ancient world.
But when we knew that death was only life
Stript of its mortal vesture, soon we saw
All things without your sunlight, and the deeps
Grew breathable, as the supernal air.
A cloudless, golden ether rain'd itself
On hill and plain, illumining the land
We loved before to look on with a light
Purer and sweeter. And we met again,
Not only all who went down on that night
A mighty people, but a host of those
Of earlier generations, kings, and chiefs,
High men of honour, who had sought us here,
Leaving awhile their own more blissful homes,
To give us comfort. I have brought thee here ;
For I have will'd that thou shouldst see the sights
That I behold, and they who live with me,
Whose memories, fill'd with the old time, create
An earth, like that which vanish'd, throwing out
The ideal beauty and unfailing love,
That lived in memory, into outward form
Imperishable. The thing is not more strange
Than what I bid thee now recall to mind,
That thou may'st know. Hast thou not seen full oft,
In dreams and visions of the night, such wonders
As make imaginations pale and cold ?
And with what senses didst thou look on them,
For eye and ear were blind and deaf, and all
Thy natural windows dark as death itself ?

And hast thou not at noonday oftentimes stood
Musing, until the sights and sounds without
Were all unseen, unheard, while lovely shapes
Swept o'er thy mind's clear mirror suddenly ?
Dream'st thou that in the world which thou hast left
Such pleasant pictures in the day or night
Come of thy selfhood ? Trust me, they are breath'd
Into thy being by immortal ones,
As I breathe now ; and so thine ears and eyes
Do hear and see around thee ev'n as mine.
And what thou seest now, because I see,
Is spirit-substance, everlasting, strong,
Because the spirit itself can never fail.'

Thus spoke King Atlas. Now I seem to stand
Upon a mountain summit, and I see
Beneath the drowned city, as of old
Its earthly denizens so oft had seen,
On sunny daybreaks when the air was still,
And all the tumult and the motion rose
Soften'd into a murmur ; and I count
Its every dome and spire, as once they flash'd
In the gay morn and morning of the world ;
For we look on the circumambient earth
Of kindred substance. Lo ! though all is changed
From matter into spirit, yet all abides
Seeming the same ; and thou may'st see full well
That spirit, by spiritual substance bound,
Looks out, as once mortality, inwall'd
By space and time ; the vision that thou seest

Hath not an atom of the dust of earth.
And, if we see the old Atlantis still,
'Tis that our own imperishable thought
Sets every hill and valley in its place,
As once it was ; and, tho' the mountains sink,
And valleys rise on the old earth of time,
And bastion'd capitals are burnt with fire,
And regions waste with ages and are lost,
And sea and land change places, and the race
That is to-day, to-morrow is no more ;
Oh ! while the spirit of man immortal is,
The world around him, wheresoe'er he is,
Endureth with him deathless, and all change
Is but a nobler shape of things that are,
For ever perfecting, and not the end
Of good that was and nevermore shall be.'
Then she awoke, and wonder'd at herself,—
Ev'n as an infant whose undreaming soul
Deems the long night as but a moment past,
When her eyes open to the morning sun—
Remembering nought. I wonder'd more than she.
And when I show'd her written her own words,
She paled with doubt and fear, and fled away.'
He ended ; and again he raised his head,
As one awakening from a troubled sleep
Suddenly, and his mournful majesty
Of look and tone gave place to a sweet smile,
Gracious, as might have been the smile of them,
Firstborn of Time and Nature, whom he praised ;

Who through his fancy seem'd to live again,
As though he held the memory of those days
Lock'd in his heart and brain.

VII

“The King arose,
The guests dispersed, the doors were open thrown.
'Come,' said my venerable guide and friend,
'Let us go forth into the City, raised
After the pattern of that elder one,
So fair, the paragon of kingly thrones,
Discrowned heir of old regalities,
Bereaved infant suckled at the breast
Of a more regal mother. O my friend !
The goodly city that thou seest now,
Although it be immemorably old,
Owns but few stones of that great capital
That lies beneath us ; it hath waned to this
Thro' many ages, till it seems in truth
To be the risen spectre of the drown'd.
This realm, how fair soe'er it seems to thee,
Was but the last gem, loosen'd from the chain,
That link'd the rising to the setting sun
Across the gulphy seas, that humbly then
Kiss'd the bright feet of its imperial hills,
And ever-vernal plains.' He pass'd before
Out of the portal, and I follow'd him
Into the crowded city, through the marts,

By palaces, and crumbling theatres,
Up to the central citadel, and thence
He show'd me all the face of land and sea.
I wonder'd, as I mark'd the gracious forms
And aspects of those islanders. I felt
That some great sorrow, remnant of the past,
Heirloom in every heart, transfigured them,
And, like a shadow of eclipse, bedimm'd
Their natural mirth, best gift of heaven to men,
And made their motions stealthy, as the steps
Of those who waken while a monarch sleeps ;
And the best radiance of their happiest thoughts
Was but a mournful glimmer of a smile,
Like moonshine after a long summerday.
The midday tumult of the life of men,
The concourse, and the chariots, and the cries,
That stir the cities of the travell'd world,
Hellas, or Iran, Egypt, Babylon,
Were muffled to a murmur ; and I saw
Fishers, and fowlers, merchants, marketmen,
Damsels that hung their panniers on their arms,
Or bore their water-urns upon their heads,
Go by me softly, as a silent scene
Shown in a picture ; or a troop of ghosts
Vision'd in a dream, whose voices sound
Thin as a far-off multitude's, that call
From a high mountain. 'Wonder not,' he said,
'That sadness is the seal upon the brow
Of this doom'd race, erewhile so glad and strong.'

For, as the fashion of the form comes down
Thro' countless generations, so within
The ruling passions, that possess'd the sires,
Rule o'er the sons ; and so, from age to age,
This orphan isle hath mourned its mother's fate
So constantly, that on our faces dwell
The memories of our sorrows. Wonder not,
Tho' that dread day be far behind us now,
The shadow of it lingers on our souls,
As though it were a storm of yestereven.
Yearly with lamentation and with tears
And beaten breasts, and dust upon our heads,
And sad procession as a funeral pomp,
We go out from the city to the shore
Of the great sea, those waters without end,
That swallow'd up that race of godlike men
With all their realm, save only this lone isle
Whereon we stand. And when we reach the heights,
Wherfrom the last fair fragment of that land
Was sever'd, there is weeping, with the sound
Of sympathetic music. Ere we part,
We lift our arms over the threatful deep,
Whose dreadful voices call us, and we plead
To the Immortals who have charge of us,
To spare the little remnant ; and we fling
Garlands upon the waters ; and we burn
A fragrant offering to the Almighty One
Who fashion'd Space and Time ; and all together
We sing a hymn that dies into a dirge,

Then into doleful silence. So we turn
Back to the city, and we hold the day
Sacred to sorrow, for the ancient time
Whose glory was, and nevermore may be.'
He spoke no more : and now the sun went down
Beyond the western heights, and all the land
Grew dark between the city and the hills.

PART II

I

"ONE day we wander'd to the western side
O' the island, passing through a matchless realm,
A bowered champaign, rich in corn and wine,
And all fair growths of Hellas, with a wealth
Of native fruitage I had never seen,
Gleaming amid their thickets of dark leaf
And deepest shade. Oh what a fairyland !
I mark'd how tall flowers tassell'd the tall trees,
Filling the clime with odours and with light.
I listen'd the rare songbirds never heard
In other lands ; I glimpsed the nimble play
Of happy fearless creatures, in green shade
Of interlinked branch and leaf, or down
The wandering woodwalks. Many a bloomy dale,
Made musical with fountain-waters, curved
'Twixt slopes, that teem'd with the perennial pomps
Of mingled Spring and Autumn ; from the heights,

Tufted with gardens, rose white pleasure-house,
And sacred dome. At last we reach'd the sea,
And, looking down upon the purple vast,
Heard only the low winds and mourning waves
Instead of all the voices of the Past.

Sighing he said, 'Behold, my friend,' and sign'd
Toward the western side, and the great deep,
That lay as tranquil, as tho' never Time
Had ruffled its dark purples, mix'd with green
And rose, and all soft colours, as the shells
Upon its shores. 'There was a time,' he said,
'When he, who look'd down from these island heights,
Which then lay midway 'twixt the lovely lands
Far West, and the extremest Orient,
Saw but the valleys, and the folded hills,
Azure, and green, and golden, where the light
Drown'd itself in unfathomable glooms
Of forest shades ; or struck the cataract
In its full swing ; or lit the tawny slopes
Of the full harvest ; or, in later days,
The orchards piled up to the mountain crests ;
Or paths of pleasure-gardens fringed with rose ;
Or fountains, flinging up from precious cups
Of agate, or of porphyry, diamond dews,
And charming drops of silver into gold.
And, when the eye fell on the soft blue peaks
And throned clouds, he knew that underneath
There wander'd green ways into other worlds
Beyond. So tell the legends of that race,

Whose primal habitation of delights
And loveliness went down beneath the sea.
Hark ! how it whispers when the gusty wind
Blows hitherward, as though it would reveal
Things only known unto it and that wind,
Its messenger ; for only thou, O Sea,
Canst look down on the ruins thou hast made.
Do not the giants of those godlike days
Sleep there, their brows upon their folded arms,
Above their wasted treasures, some great day
To be awaken'd, and to rise again
With a great shout, and shake this fallen world ?
But this is idle phantasy ; my thoughts
Could wander thus, before I heard the voice
Of the great king speak thro' the unconscious child.
They will not come, but we shall go to them.
See yon great rock, yon tower'd and steepled pile,
That throws along the deep its shadows lone,
As tho' Death's self should cast his image down
Upon a sepulchre ; so old it is,
That hoary palace-temple of our kings !
'Twas there the tranced maiden, in her sleep
Of living death, pass'd underneath the earth
Into the sunken mountain, on whose crest
The palace rose, as far above the plain,
As now the city lies beneath the waves.'
And, as we stood upon the utmost verge
Of the steep cliff, rent from a drowned world,
And saw the sea between the castled rock

And the isle, he show'd me, laid along the strait,
A rocky mole, built of unmortar'd stone,
And a broad way atop, that bridged the gulf
To that primeval monumental height,
Vast skeleton of the departed kings.

'See,' said my guide, 'right onward from the base
Of this storm-beaten precipice, the sea
Is shallow, till beyond the ruin'd pile ;
And then into unfathomable depths
It falls at once, but all between is dense
With fragments of the ancient capital,
Cumber'd with shatter'd marbles, thick with rocks,
Which the long lapse of ages hath engrain'd
With sea-born atoms, shifting sands, and shells.
And, when the waters are serene and still,
Sometimes we have a sight of things, that lay
Unseen, unshaken since the awful day ;
And divers fetch up from their secret glooms
Relics of gold, and gems of antique mould,
Beyond our art and skill, more precious now,
As tokens of their world, than for their worth
In cunning work, or substance. So it was,
That our forefathers, hallowing that wreck
Of the first empire, laid across the strait,
Betwixt it and the island, that remain'd
Upon the ruin'd fragments as a base,
The massive mole below, that, on a high
And holy day, the people might repair
To the old temple of the ancient Gods,

And house of kings, to offer as of old
Incense and sacrifice, and light again
The sacred ruins, with the altar fires
That flamed of old, and strike the silent halls
With harp and voice.' And then, a little space
Further, he show'd me, sunken in the cliff,
A granite stair that led us face to face
With the old rock-way ; and we follow'd it,
Until we stood beneath the sacred pile,
Whose time-worn marbles for a moment shone
In a gay sun-burst, as tho' life once more
Would break forth from within it, and call up
The buried city to our sight again.
We mounted from the rock-way by a stair
Up to the palace-temple's shatter'd gates,
And marble floors ; and from the topmost step
We look'd down seaward ; and he show'd me then,
Limn'd on an ancient open scroll he held,
All he had vaguely pictured in his words
At the king's table ; how Poseidaon,
The monarch of the waters, fenced the mount—
The solitary wreck where now we stood—
And circled it with zones of land and sea,
Three zones of water, and two zones of land,
Alternately, each separate from each
By equal spaces, that his realm might be
For ever unassailable by man ;
And made me see the city that had been.
'Behold,' the old priest said, 'this blissful isle

We dwell in, lavish though it be of wealth
And beauty, is but as the face of Age,
Wherein the glorious youth it once possess'd
Is but a pale-eyed phantom. This fair land,
Round which the ocean murmurs, is the all
Left of the Great Atlantis which was whelm'd,
Whereof the memory lingers, like the shafts
Of splendour soaring from behind the clouds,
Or that illumined shore, that lies beyond
The twilight of eclipse. There was a land,
Vast as the surface of thy seven days' sea,
On either hand. The ocean thou hast plough'd,
Sailing from the far East, was once dry land,
Like the vast waters which we look on now
To farthest West ; midway this island mourn'd,
Forgotten of the world, if world there was
Beyond the waves ; where now the waters moan
The wind play'd with green paradises ; where
The threatening waters, like earthquake hills,
Rock in the wintry hurricanes, there rose
Soft slopes of corn and wine ; where the sharp crags
Shoot from the dark abysses, cities rose
Tower'd and bulwark'd ; and once there was heard,
Instead of the hoarse wind, and wailing wave,
And shrilling of the seabirds, many a swell
Of festal melody, when there were kings
And chiefs, and mighty men of old, who sleep
In deep unfathomable silence now,
And darkness evermore. Think of the days

When thou wert but a child, and this old world
Seem'd to thee fresh and new, and the free sense,
Thirsty as spring-buds for the streams of life,
And all things wondrous, drank in light and air,
Colours, and odours, and delightsome forms.
Think of those days, and of their memories now ;
And, as those rise again thro' years between
With supernatural glory, to us comes,
Thro' song and legend and wild fable, a sense
As of a nobler and a happier world ;
A world where Art and Science, since forgot,
Went hand in hand with Health, and eager Hope,
And earnest Love ; and centenary age
Was the full moonlight after summerday ;
And Death was but a deeper sleep that pass'd,
As on the eyelids of a weary child,
Leading the parted soul into new life,
As the young child into his blissful dreams.
Yet the wise world will cry, I hear it cry,
As though its utterance flew on all the winds,
'Where are the tokens now of your renown ?
The star of your primeval power, that was,
And is no more, and is for ever sunken ?
Oh ! all the glory of that ancient time
Is but a phantasy ! we are the men,
For arts, for arms, for knowledge, wealth and pow'r,
Forests spring from a seedling, and the race
With each new generation puts forth strength
And virtues unreveal'd till then. Its birth

Is as the babe's, the feeblest thing on earth,
Tho' cradled in the wisdom of the Gods,
Its youth is as a giant's !' So they cry.
But they have not well said ; for the babe's dreams,
Breathed in his heart by guardian spirits pure,
Are symbols of the young thoughts of the world,
When innocence and instincts, caught from heaven,
Are link'd together, and great knowledge comes
Swiftly, like daybreak. They have not well said,
To name themselves the full-grown Youth of Time,
When they but hold the interval between
The charmed infant and the noble man
A clime of world-wide tumults, wrath, and wrongs.
Stranger, if we may gather from the bones
Of a dead giant what his living strength,
The very dust and ashes of those days,
Which we hold fast in sanctuaries, tell
More of the Past than any fancies can.
For I can show thee fragments, shatter'd off
From that old world, that silent answers make
To all proud words.' And then he led the way
Thro' many chambers, hush'd as sepulchres,
Grey as the twilight, where the ocean's voice
Came faintly from behind the ancient walls,
Hung with the bones of empire and old Time,
As some far wilderness along the sea,
Spread o'er with wrecks of sunken armaments,
Heard of no more on earth. For these I saw
In graven image, or in pictured form,

Or folded scroll, inscribed with mystic rhythms,
With sign, and symbol half inscrutable,
Of that departed land ; a manifold voice
That told of nations of the days of prime,
Unnumber'd years before ! while some live here,
Dreaming the years of men upon the earth
Stretch not beyond the memories of old men
Of some few generations ! As I look'd,
I knew how noble and majestic arts,
And sciences, beyond all modern lore,
Were born, and wax'd from morn to perfect noon ;
While we are proud, as little children are,
To pick up some fair sea-shell, and then lay
Their ears to listen to its inner song
Oceanic, thunder of a sunken tide,
Glories that wail in far oblivion,
Faint sighs, yet breathing from the infinite,
That seem to say, 'We shall be heard again.'
I saw there, moulded after living men
Of those far times, sculptures more beautiful
Than aught we dream of ! Such were the first men ;
While we are happy, if we can behold
One in a thousand out of living men
Fair as those statues, while the thousand then
Were as this one !' And, while I stood amazed,
The old man raised his head, and clasp'd his hands,
As in deep grief, 'Oh we are fallen, fallen,
My son,' he said, 'but that that is must be.
Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter, on each other

Follow, throughout the many-pictured year,
As Childhood, Boyhood, Manhood, and Old Age
Tread on each other thro' the days of Man.
What if it be that the great Sun in heaven
Images in its course this life of ours ?
And each man in his own particular form,
From Infancy to Manhood, shadows forth
The onward steps of the whole Life of Time ?
What if the first-born cycles of the world
Are as the infant's sweet simplicity ?
What if the days of the Atlantis fair
Were as the beauty, and the innocence,
The health and joyance, of the playful boy ?
What if the troubled years in which we live
Are as the stripling's, neither boy nor man,
A struggle 'twixt the past and the to come ?
What if the unborn future be the Man,
For ever clothed with strength and bloom ; for Time
Once perfected can never see old age ?
Old age with Him is ever-added Youth !
But there are other things to see within.
Follow me, I will show thee sights to make
Thy memory wealthy, and the dreaming soul
Fertile for all the remnant of thy days,
And wise men wiser in the days to come.

II

“ A little while, ere the dread doom befell,
This realm of ours—so do our records say—

While yet the great Atlantis rode the waves,
Came from the East a wizard, who had skill
To give an outward life to inner moods
By colours, and by shadows, and by forms.
We thought at first he was no mortal man,
But of the Demigods, heroic chiefs,
Who by great deeds, and self-devoting lives,
Win themselves thrones in heaven. All day he wrought
His precious art, attended by the best
Of the land's cunning workers. They brought gems,
Silver, and gold, marbles of many hues,
And sheeny pebbles from the upland streams,
That glitter'd, like imperishable flowers,
With clearest colours. Nought that Time could mar
Shared in the glowing spaces ; so thou seest
The precious pictures ev'n as at the first ;
The dust of ruin, and the soundless teeth
Of ages have not marr'd them. Here they stand,
Pointing to the four ages of the world,
As 'twere four giants throned in the four winds !
Vast were his memories, and he spoke the tongues
Of many peoples with our own ; he sigh'd,
Oft as he mingled bitter thoughts and sweet,
Speaking of things that first began to gloom,
And threaten, many thousand years before
This age of time. 'I wander from a land,
Where Evil swallows up the light of Good,
As shadows lengthen from the setting sun.
I wander from a land where all things great

Have grown and blossom'd, ev'n as they do here ;
But the clear spirits of that noble race
Are clouding yearly ; the heroic form
Begins to bow beneath the waste of life.
Thriftless of time they revel, and the man,
That look'd up to things godlike, seeks no more
Than to enthrone himself above his peers,
Till festal triumphs hallow cursed things ;
Till banquets end in blood, and songs in sighs ;
Till holy men, whose eyes were love and truth,
Whose hearts were sunny summers, now are they
Who only weep ; till fruitful realms are changed
Into a wilderness. So I have fled,
And seek to die far from the land I loved,
Rather than look upon its utter end.
But I have purposed, ere I die, to leave
An image of my thoughts to aftertimes ;
To make a speechless shadow speak of me ;
So that such silent records shall discourse
More movingly than any breathed words ;
A colour'd dream to be interpreted
By the wise men of ages that shall be.
The jocund years of the sweet birth of Time,
The dewy dawn and sunrise are no more.
I see the tempest coming up, with clouds
And darkness ; and I weep to think that none
Shall ever see the morn of years again,
Nor any living race look on this world
As once it was before. But, when I mused

Of my own self, the marvels I infold
Within this mystic personality,
That wraps up in itself the outer world,
And inward ; all one little will can do ;
The secret rivers and uncounted rills
That run within me ; secret fires that burn
Ev'n till a hundred years ; and all the stars
Of thought, that lighten from our heaven of mind
Above this body of matter ; hopes, and loves,
And phantasies that make a God of me,
A God on earth, able to rule and rise
From throne to throne of empire over Time ;
I dreamt, and still I dream that every age,
From infancy to manhood, shadows forth
A separate cycle of the onward life
Of the whole race of Man, from first to last :
And all together show its life entire,
Ev'n as one spark of light the glorious sun ;
Ev'n as one waterdrop the sumless seas :
Ev'n as one grain of dust the spanless world.

III

“ ‘Therefore they show’d him—so the record runs—
Vast halls of the old palace of the kings,
Where now we stand, where silence reigns’alone ;
Which once were throng’d with the primeval men,
Men of renown, bards, minstrels, lords of mind,
Who hallow’d not things evil, but the good ;

And triumph'd o'er the hearts and loving eyes
Of their enraptured fellows, by such arts,
As have not left to these faint days of ours
Aught but the last and feeblest echo, drawn
From other echoes ; who bore down with them,
That fatal night, down into the dark sea,
Wonders of wisdom, not to be unveil'd
Till the good days are come again, and Time
Shall bring about the manhood of the earth ;
And all the beauty of the Past shall spring
To life again, like a strange harvest reap'd
From seed sown after many thousand years ;
And, blending with the firstfruits of that day,
The everlasting Age that is to be,
Round off the wondrous circle of the world !
And here he limn'd those vast symbolic forms,
Half shadow of the Past, half prophecy,
Whose secret, hadst thou never reach'd this shore,
The nations of the world had never known,
Whose dread fulfilment thou hast seen in part—
This moonlight interval 'twixt day and day—
Whose perfect morn of Life, henceforth to be,
The sevenfold light of that unrisen sun,
Alas ! no living race may hope to see !'

IV

"We enter'd now a chamber cold, and vast,
And silent ; and he said, 'Look on the walls.'
And I beheld four pictured mysteries ;

Each picture twofold in its imagery ;
And, subdivided into many parts,
Show'd in one half the glory of the time,
And in the other its earth-shaking fall.
Before each picture was a sculptured shape.
I saw before the first an innocent babe ;
Before the second stood a merry boy ;
Before the third a stripling sad and pale ;
Before the fourth a mighty full-grown man ;
Each limned on its own particular wall,
In colours still undimm'd as at the first,
To make known that the painter had portray'd
Some age of living progress ; after it
Some day of desolations which befell,
And fill'd the earth with ruins, and the hearts
Of its inhabitants with fears, as great
As if the Immortal Gods, full-arm'd and wing'd
With fire and thunder, had come down to craze
The sons of men. Again my guide began ;
'Behold these silent phantasms on the walls ;
For they are all that tell us in this age
Of greater ages, better life ; the first
And second are gone by for evermore,
And scarce a twilight lingers ; but the third
Symbols the age, whereof he saw the dawn,
Sunless and cold, and prophesied its day,
Wherein we live till now, if all thou say'st
Of the great woful outer world be true.
The fourth, I doubt not, images a time,

Glad as a sunrise after dismal days
And nights of wintry darkness ; it shall be !
For he who pictured them, it seems, design'd
To show us that the individual man,
In his own person, is the type of all
The stages in the great life of the race,
From infancy, thro' boyhood, and that frail
And vexed interval 'twixt boy and man,
Up to the perfect lustihood of Youth ;
Whereof two stages only have we run,
And even now are struggling in the third,
With only this faint hope that, after lapse
Of untold generations, the sick world
Should clothe it in the majesty of Man,
And move through endless æons, calm and strong.
In these behold the changes of all Time
From the beginning ; for the remnant, left
After each world-wide havoc, whisper'd of it
To the next generation, and they bore
The legend to their children, till the time
When the next day of doom o'ershadow'd them,
Leaving a few to keep the knowledge of it
For their descendants. As I tell to thee
The sorrows of our fall, inheriting
The lamentable story from the few,
Who lived beyond the deluge, that o'erwhelm'd
The ancient lovely land, so they before
Wafted the terrors down thro' countless years
Up to the days when the great realm—whereof

This island fragment only lives to tell—
Was fresh and new ; and on these silent walls
Thou may'st behold the secrets of the Past,
As they came down thro' thousand thousand years,
Ev'n to this very hour. The hand that shaped
These lights and shadows of primeval years,
More cunning in the skill of later days,
Gave form and colour to the solemn chants
Of ages upon ages, ere the art
Of poet, or of painter, had come forth
To make them heard and seen. I hear thee say
That legendary marvels, like a flood,
Or rolling fire, get strength as they come on,
Feeding upon the fears of them who tell
The fears they have been told again, to those
Who darken them with other fears. But doom,
My friend, and death, that striketh suddenly
'Mid flames, and falling mountains, and the roar
Of torrent waters, scarce can be outdone,
Or even imaged fitly ; for the soul,
Dealing with such incomparable woes,
Can hardly fashion in its wildest trance
That which it never suffer'd ; so, may be,
All that thou seest falls short of half the true,
How sad soe'er it seem. Those only who burn
Can tell us what is fire, and drowning men
How dire is the unbreathable abyss ;
And only such, as die in fear and pain
Suddenly, can know all the dread of Death !

V

“ ‘Stranger, look up,’ he said, ‘what dost thou see
On the great wall before thee?’ As he spoke,
I turn’d to scan more clearly what at first
Seem’d dim confusion; but intenter gaze
Unravell’d the far mystery of that time,—
First cycle of the first-born men who lived
Their measured date, and perish’d—and I saw
In the first picture, by the sculptured babe,
A pastoral realm with slopes of green; a vale
Of many waters; and I seem’d to hear
The whispers of the woodlands, in the flow
Of the sweet winds that herald a new dawn;
The songs of shepherds, mingling with the bleat
Of flocks that wander’d freely; and the wings
Of fearless songbirds rustling in the leaves,
By the clear runnels, whose unsullied springs
No breath of burning summers ever quench’d,
No frosts of winter chain’d. They, lightly clad,
Were free to roam the boundless world, as yet
Unscarr’d of evil, and to reach their hands
To gather the wild vintage all the year,
Lavish’d by the boon Mother, and to reap
Spontaneous harvests. ‘See,’ he said, ‘the days
When-so the tongues of countless ages ran,—
There was no fear, no pain, nor any smear
Of bloodshed on the dewy green and flowers,
The Age of Infancy, the Age of Gold.

And, as the infant full of faith will sleep,
His head upon his mother's breast, so Man,
Guiltless and guileless, fear'd no monstrous thing
In his woodwalks, and grottoes cool. God's hand
Prepared a safe home for the innocent ;
No lion roar'd, no serpent hiss'd ; no storm
Lash'd the fair champaign, or the mountainside ;
No earthquake shook, no torrent overwhelm'd ;
And naked Winter had not wander'd down
From his far kingdom on the peaks of snow.
The outward aspect of the lovely earth
Answer'd unto the lovable kind heart
Of its first habitants ; and, if they knew
No marvels, such as later ages vaunt,
No starry secrets, no earth-hidden wealth,
No rapturous outbreathings, such as shape
The Arts that lift up others to behold
Unearthly paradises, they were blithe
As the free birds whose toil is bliss to them ;
And their untutor'd gay simplicity
Lived in the life of Nature. Their pure sense
Drank of her stainless bounties, as their thirst
Of the wild rockborn waters for all wine.
Such was the Age of Innocence ; and there
Thou may'st behold the symbol of the whole,
A laughing infant cradled in spring-flowers.'

VI

“Then on the other half the artist strove
To tell us unimaginable things.
‘Thou wouldest not dream that it could ever be,’
The old man said in accents sad and low,
‘But that primeval, fair, and guileless race
Lapsed into Evil, and, when Love and Truth
Are darken’d, then upon the Outer World
The shadow falls, for Man and Nature meet
As Body and Soul ; as fleshly Ill is born
Of Spiritual Evil, so the Outer World
Entire reflects the Inner in its Whole.
Behold thou seest the first of fallen worlds.’
And while he spoke I look’d on it, and lo !
Mountains were shaking, and unprison’d flames
Swathed every valley and green hill with death.
The mist of waters and commingling fires
Rose, as the smoke of furnaces ; and all
The distances were dark as coming night
When thunders roll up, drowning moon and star.
I saw whole armies of affrighted souls
Flee into gloomy caverns underground,
From the death-breathing blasts, and burning hail.
‘Herein,’ the old man said, ‘is seen portray’d
The doom of the most ancient world by fire.

VII

“ ‘Look,’ said my guide, ‘upon the second wall.’
Before the picture stood its symbol form,
A merry-hearted boy, twelve years of age.
The babe is grown into the fearless boy.
The first simplicity, that loved to lean
On others’ strength, hath put on its own will ;
A daring heart is lifted on the wings
Of boundless exultation, and the hope
That sees not possibilities of ill ;
Danger is nought, and life itself is nought,
If each new day bring not its own delight,
And new emprise ; the thriftless joy, and strength,
That measures not itself, nor counts mischance,
Bear him, like blown waves over hidden shoals
And perilous rocks. His is the time of day
When the sun flies above the mountain-tops,
Casting its glory on the western side,
And showing all things in the sudden light
That were in shadow ; so his instincts soar
Up thro’ the realms of knowledge eagle-wise,
Springing toward the light, seen thro’ the cloud.
And what he sees with wonderment he loves,
And wills to master and possess. The throbs
Of panting toil are hush’d, amid the glow
Of unrelaxing ardour, as the pains
Of wounded men are lull’d amid the dust
And shouts of onset ; with the love of life

The life he lives is quicken'd, and becomes
Twofold itself ; so that, tho' young and frail,
Strong men themselves will marvel at his might,
And promise of great prowess. ‘Stranger, these
Were the old days of our departed bliss,
What time the great Atlantis rode the waves,
And all the land was full of mirth and songs,
And no proud passions jarr'd the clime of peace
With struggles for dominion ; no man strove
Against his fellow, in that love of self,
Which changes honest impulse into guile,
And unforgotten failure to revenge,
More than the merry boy, who strikes, and laughs,
And, whether vanquish'd or the victor, sleeps
Without a thought of evil ; for the blaze
Of wrath aroused sank with the setting sun.
Oh happy morning of delighted hearts,
And newborn hopes, and winged thoughts, that sprang,
Like larks that fill the sunlight with their songs !
Why art thou fled, and whither ? Shall we see
Any more the glad mountains, clothed with light,
Like kings with festal garments ? that sweet light
Of everlasting Spring that kiss'd the earth
Each morn ? The blossoming green woodland, bright
And quivering with the tender nightly shower ?
The teeming valleys, laughing to the brim
With harvest and with vintage ? For the earth
Fail'd not of old, no more than the pure heart
Of man and maid lack'd joyaunce ; than their limbs,

Complete in beauty, wanted for one day
The even flow of life. So all the land,
From east to west, was one great garland, wrought
Of all the spring-flowers of prosperity ;
And hurricane and earthquake roll'd not then
Over our pleasant gardens ; and the dawn
Was as the gate of Heaven, the evening sweet
And clear and calm, as the last hour of man
Who swoon'd into oblivion without pain.'

VIII

" I look'd upon the second wall, and lo !
The glory of a sunrise, when the tide
Of dawn hath flooded o'er the purple peaks,
And bears down like a cataract on the world.
The shepherds and their flocks are fled away
Far up into the mountain solitudes ;
And the dark forest shows its turf-walks smooth,
And breezy aisles, as tho' the wild were wrought
Into a natural temple ; now the brier
Tangles not, nor the wildgrape by the way
Hangs out its amber clusters, but the trim,
Full-fruited vinerows tent their alleys green,
And yellow cornslopes waver in the wind.
For man hath flatter'd so the bounteous heart
Of the great Mother, that she rises up
And clothes herself anew ; she bids the nymphs,
Her drowsy handmaids, wake to a new morn,

Deck them in festal robes, and minister
To all best uses. Order, like a bride,
With measured step seeks every secret place
Of the old house, and she will garnish it
Till all seems new. Where wildings, fruits or flowers,
Sprang unregarded in the tangled brake,
Or shiver'd in the sunless glen, or pined
In thirsty sands, she leads forth, as a spouse
Her simple children ; and the burnish'd earth
Grows a fit habitation for the heart
And mind ; and goodly tabernacles rise
For Gods and men ; and nature and the soul,
Illumining each other, make a world
Of daily wonders, hope emblazoning
The coming hours as the morning sun
Long avenues of roses ; morrow's dawn
Lighted at memories of sweet yesterday ;
And, with the will to do, great things are done,
Faith working miracles. For the heart unscathed
By woes remember'd—barbed points of ill—
Weighs not the venture which its love achieves,
And, if it fails, strives on till all is done.
As the sun rose, I saw a troop of girls
Ascending by a mountain-walk, that shelved
Into a fragrant valley, thick with trees,
Almond, and orange, nut, and fig, and pear ;
Dark evergreens, pierced with the spiry stems
Of cypress and of poplar. All the wood,
Flowing before a low wind from the east,

Lay softly rippling in the morning gold.
The slant beams struck upon their happy eyes,
And flash'd from clasped zone, and scarlet vest,
And sandals fleckt with dew, as they came up
With merriment and songs ; then lost their way
In emerald deeps of green, and shadows cool ;
And down green alleys carpeted with mint,
Wild strawberries, and purple Autumn flowers,
All curtain'd o'er with network of broad leaves,
That on the sward their chequer'd image threw,
With golden lights between, that here and there
Flamed on some fallen bunch of purple fruit,
Struck down in haste, and trodden under foot,
And crush'd 'mid scatter'd leaves, and pearly dews,
And bleeding precious drops. Onward they came—
Methought I heard their songs—and, poised aloft
By native art, and with a single touch
Of their light fingers, on their jocund heads,
Baskets of unpeel'd osier, trick'd with leaves,
And bellied with the grape, whose lavish blood
Stain'd all the green, and rain'd upon the moss.
Tall were they as young Oreads ; on their necks,
Warm ivory, roll'd down their ebon locks,
Like the curl'd cloud, that hides the light of morn,
Taking and giving beauty ; their sunn'd brows
Shaded with large and dewy pampinus ;
And in their hands some twisted stems they bore
Clasp'd with vine tendrils ; they came up with songs !
It is the symbol of the growing life

Of the world's youth and beauty ; 'tis the first
Full vintage of the world brought in with songs,
The first ingathering of the grapes of joy !

IX

"Then, on the other half, the artist strove
To tell us unimaginable things ;
'Thou wouldst not dream that it could ever be,'
The old man said in accents sad and low,
'But ev'n that second, hopeful, happy race
Lapsed into Evil, and its fatal doom :
Behold another, and a sadder change ;'
I look'd upon the picture, and behold
The day had darkened, and the mountain-towers
Were wrapt in thunders. One fair girl apart,
Upon a sere knoll in the foreground, stood.
A pannier, piled with the last Autumn gifts,
Had fallen from her head, and cast its fruits
Amid the dry leaves and the dying flowers.
She look'd across the land toward the hills,
With such a gaze as the first terror brings
To a fair child, whose heart could hold no fear,
Because of love given, and return'd ; a tear
Shone in the last light of the parting sun.
With one foot forward as about to fly
She stood ; ah ! whither ? swiftly from the heights
The winged death, swathed in a ghastly mist,
Came flying ; and, from under the pale storm,

Roll'd down the torrents with a might, that shook
The marble walls ; methought I heard them roll.
And from before the torrent and the cloud
The fearful country-folk, with stormblown hair
And outstretch'd arms, fled wailing ; 'twas the last.
Again I see her on the wither'd knoll,
That maid forlorn ; but round about the base
Of the lone hillock rush the torrent streams,
And make an isle of it ; she cries in vain ;
For none can hear her weeping in the storm,
And none could help her in her utmost need.
And now I saw a fearful remnant crowd
The mountain steeps, far over roaring floods,
That gather momently, as they would sweep
Their very crests beneath them ; some are there
On lower heights, and nearer to the seas,
Who stretch their arms to their beloved ones,
To lift them up from crazy barks, and boughs,
And rafters of their dwellings overwhelm'd.
'So once again,' he said, 'a world was lost
By waters ; but we are a remnant saved !'
Sad sunset of the blissful age of gold,
The summer morn of Time ; before it stood
The marble symbol of that blissful day,
The merry-hearted boy twelve years of age.

X

" Again my guide turn'd toward me, and said,
' Stranger, what seest thou on the third wall ? say.'

I see a traveller in a mountainland.
Under dark-frowning, wintry clouds he stands
Above the purple of the lower hills,
Just on the edge of a high plain of snow,
Whence, in sight of higher frozen heights,
And sunless valleys, lo ! far up, beyond,
And underneath, he sees a pale new world.
It is the realm of mighty Death himself,
Ghastly, and grim, whereon dim moonlight pours
Askance, thro' clefts in the great roof of cloud,
Revealing dim titanies, and shows
The piled city of the bloodless King
Shuddering with icy splendours, and alone
Amid the stars of night ; where he unseen,
The giant old, lord of the silence vast,
Forges from his exhaustless treasures
Armour for endless winters ; chains and bars
To prison the free elements, and bolt,
Under crystalline rocks, for countless years,
Until the world be ended ; linked atoms
To bind all winged things, that love to live,
With the loud winds and streams : or thence unlocks
His sweeping desolations, hurricane,
Whirlwind, and hail ; and rolls down the great wheels
That shake the world. And underneath he sees,
Along the moonlit valleys strown, what seem
The monstrous ruins of a fallen world,
Sheer emptied into this ; he seems to hear
Above, below, and far and near, along

That ghostly region, dismal groans, and sighs,
As of weird armies driven 'twixt icy walls ;
Clangours of rending adamant, flung back
From cliffs and caverns far remote, with sound,
Like rushing on of brazen wheels of war.
He flies in fear from that abhorred hold,
He knows not whither. Again he looks upon
Another sight, a boundless plain below
The frozen mountains. Still above him soar,
Above the earth, above the sable clouds,
The towers and bulwarks of that City of Death,
Whose wakeful warders ever looked abroad,
Ev'n to the utmost bounds ; and from its walls
Glance unseen arrows, charged with doom, that smite
The hearts of men with faintness, smite with pain,
Fear, and despair : and round about him lies
A battlefield, lit by a blood-red moon,
That show'd it scatter'd with the helms, and arms,
And corselets of the slain. Foe, laid by foe,
Felt with his cold hand for his broken sword,
To plunge it in the dead cold heart beside him,
And smiled a wan smile, dreaming he would slay
Afresh the slain man by him. Then I saw
The muffled robber, like a nightbird, steal
Between the fallen, to strip off their last
Torn garments from them ; and one, who had found
Another robber, stealthier than himself,
Possess'd of that he sought, fell on him there,
And slew him ; and a stronger than himself

Crouching hard by in shadow of a rock,
Shall slay him in his turn ; strife follows strife,
War begets war. It seem'd the weary battle
Had welter'd thro' long ages, one long night,
Lit by a moon whose setting was not yet ;
For never sun had shone upon that world.
Amid the armed warriors that strove on,
Amid the dead and dying, I could see
The bleaching bones of others who had fallen
Ages agone ; and there were cairns, and caves,
And mounds, that hid the dead men of the Past ;
And arches graven with the fearful deeds
They had accomplish'd. Others, from high towers
With barred gates, blew trumpets to defy
Their hated brothers, and were answer'd quick
From other towers. Beneath, in shadow, lay
Lean beggars, with lean dogs and crawling things,
Suppliants for the poor dole that came anon
From iron hands above them ; but no peace ;
Only the bloodshed under the red moon.
And I could see the portals of tall fanes
Throng'd with the proud and pitiless, mingled with
The prouder priests, who blest their bloody hopes,
When they went forth to kill men, or received them,
After the bloodshed, with a hymn of praise !
But, in the distance, two or three I mark'd
Ascending a grey slope towards the East,
With slow step, yet with upward-gazing eyes ;
For, far behind the dusky field of death,

A glimmer of a coming dawn was seen.
They seem'd a solitary remnant, fled
From dread and darkness, and they seem'd to tread
A weary way to some new world, a world
Lit by a sun, not by that blood-red moon,
That show'd all faces ghastly and deform.
'This shows us, O my friend,' the old man said,
'The world we live in now; for, if this isle,
The lovely remnant of a peaceful prime,
Be spared the havoc of the world without,
What thou hast told me of the ways of men,
Their feuds, their fears, their perils, and their cares,
Their plagues, and famines, their faint hopes of good
From any change, may show thee how the wise,
Prophetic soul, who drew these shadowy shapes,
Truly foresaw that future of our race,
Which is the present, symbol'd in that stage
Of his own life between the boy and man.
Therefore thou seest the carven stripling stands
Before the picture; one hand tears his hair,
One hand is raised to threaten; yet he weeps!'

XI

"Then, on the other half, the artist strove
To tell us unimaginable things.
While they are struggling on that battlefield,
O'ershadow'd by the citadel of Death,
The first ray from the reascending sun

Smiles on the brazen legions, and the tongues
Of terror and of anguish cease at once.
They cannot look upon that light and live.
And there is world-wide silence ; nothing breathes,
Save the few wanderers wending toward the East.
It is the end of the long night of Time.
As wanderers gasp in the high mountain air ;
As prison'd eyes grow blind in sudden light ;
Evil hath perish'd, smitten down by Good.

XII

“ ‘These two or three shall build a better world.’
Sighing the old man said, ‘ My son, our time,
Methinks. All these wild years of woes and wrongs,
Of tumults, and of discords, and of hates—
When Nature’s self draws with her mighty hand
On the great spaces of the outer world,
In hurricanes, in earthquakes, flood and fire ;
When nation wars with nation, man with man,
And each deems this world made for him alone,
Or to be won from others—seems that age
‘Twixt infancy and youth, when first the boy
Scorns at himself, the late untutor’d child ;
Scorns at himself, the yet imperfect man ;
Sickens to look back at his merry days,
When phantasy clothed every little thing
With wonder, every childish act was done
With earnest love, and quicken’d into life

With joy like that of gods ; and yet repines,
Although he would not lock the wheels of Time,
To muse on the sweet memories of those hours,
Thus wasted in infantine glee, yet more
Than aught he knows of since, those sunbright hours
That nevermore can be. A mightier soul
Gets wings with him now ; far off he sees
Glory, and power, and marvels ; but his heart
Faints at the future, though it spurns the past.
Stronger than little children, he is weak,
And but a child before the armed man.
Thus the pure peace of infancy is lost,
The stature of proud manhood is not gain'd.
Thus stands he, wavering idly 'twixt the two,
Shaken by changeful storms of fear and pride,
Weeping vain tears, or kindling vain desires,
Blazing with angers, mad with baffled hopes,
Drown'd in love-swoons, and dreaming heavenly joys ;
Rending in rage his simple handiwork,
To be rebuilt with nicer art again.
His soul is tossing in so many moods
That none can hold him ; and inconstancy
Within him leads him on to doubt the truth
Of all without him—‘Are there powers above,’
He cries, ‘who see and suffer this ill world
Of chance and tumult ; such a thing as I?’—
Until the time when he begins to feel
The strength of Youth, and straight forgets the days
Of his first simple innocence, and all

The lights and shadows of the years between,
And looks right onward. In another scene
Of the same picture, see, the artist draws
Time passing onward, as a traveller swift,
Treading a stormy frontier 'twixt two realms,
Where lions prowl, and serpents hiss ; who sees
Caverns, and cliffs by lightning-light, and hears
The winds and waters howling ; and behind
Sees the dear land he shall not seek again ;
And far before him other regions vast,
With towered heights, and cities dimly shown.
So, after the delighted lovely Prime
Of ages, other ages dawn'd ; and days
Of clouds, and darkness, and unruly fires.
And we, O stranger, wheresoe'er the world
Is habitable, are the dwellers now
Of the wild frontier wilderness, beneath
A whirling sky, upon a quaking earth.
The sweet infantine sense of earlier life,
The kind instincts of nature, the pure joy
Of Nature's beauty, are a fable now.
The simple mirth, and the unruffled peace ;
The temperate yet full-hearted pleasure, quaff'd
With the keen sense and uncorrupted soul ;
The hand that needed not draw back, or fear,
To gather all sweet flowers and fruits ; the will,
That needed no repentance of its pure,
And lawful purposes ; all this, my friend,
Is as far music floating down the wind,

Listen'd to with sad-hearted eagerness,
For it may nevermore be heard ; or then
Only, when the bright stars we look on now
Come back to the same spaces, after flight
Through all heaven, and immeasurable years !

XIII

“ ‘ Turn,’ said my guide, ‘ to the fourth wall and see.’
Before the picture, shapen wondrously,
There stood the symbol of a perfect one,
Boon and majestic, beautiful and strong ;
The stripling grown into the perfect man ;
Nobility throned on expanded brows
Radiant ; and eyes kindling with love and light ;
An age of promise of all mighty things,
Henceforth to crown his being without end.
‘ Lo ! ’ said my guide, ‘ the fourth age of the world,
To follow after these forlornest years
Of struggling races, and distracted souls,
When earth rebels against the Gods in Heaven,
When nation strives with nation, house with house,
Brother with brother, and the very thoughts
Of one sad heart are warring with themselves.
Far off that day may be ; yet it shall come
With fair new hopes, and other loves, as he,
The carven image, with illumined gaze
Turns upward, and right onward ; with his hand
Waving his full locks in the summer air,

And stepping forward, as a warrior sprung
From sleep, to win great conquests, not of blood,
Of burning cities, of disbanded hosts ;
But such as, from the ruins of the Past,
Over the fallen towers and pyramids
Of pride, shall lay the great foundation-stones
Of endless progress into brighter day ;
Of empire over Evil, and that rule,
That shall bind all the sons of man together
In bonds of love and knowledge. Look, his eyes
Raised heavenward, and his firm foot on the earth,
Symbol the long-lost harmony of Gods,
And men, and Nature, brought beneath his sway,
From end to end of the wide wondrous world,
By help of the Immortal ones themselves !'

XIV

"I look'd on the fourth wall, and saw thereon:
The selfsame traveller on the mountain-land.
But now he stands in wonder ; hath he dreamt
Of that grim region, and that city pale,
That dismal battlefield, and blood-red moon ?
Now he sees nothing—nothing—for at first
The glory of another sunrise blinds
His eyes. He cannot see the eastern clime,
For its own amber smoke of radiance floods,
And brims the happy vales, as tho' the seas,
Changed into sunbright fiery ethers, whelm'd

The world, erewhile lock'd under doleful chains
Of icy darkness. Soon his dazzled eyes
Grew stronger in the light ; and now he sees
That ghastly city with its icy towers—
Death's armoury, whence universal ill
Ray'd round about, as from a central sun
Beauty and life—by some great countercharm
Wrought into solid gold, wherethrough ascends
The splendour from the East, and makes those walls
Diaphanous, as when a summer rose,
Beauty itself, becomes more beautiful
In rosy ways transfused ; and, with the light,
Roll down swift winds, and sweep the illumin'd plain.
That battlefield ! and all the ruin there,
Deep in the dust of ages, or piled up
In funeral pyramids, is blown away ;
As when a fire, that runs along the ground,
Licks up the dry weeds of a wilderness.
He stands upon the very plot of ground
Where once he crush'd the frozen snows ; but, see,
His feet are hidden amid purple flowers ;
He breathes the sweetness of their mingled souls.
And where the silent midnight round him slept,
Or started to appalling sounds, he hears
The still, small voices of unnumber'd streams
In whisper'd converse, as of captives' tongues,
Who fly in fear from the abhorred hold,
And gladden with the dawn of this new day.
Again he hearkens, gazing eagerly

Thro' the orient fire, as though he heard
From far an onward motion of great wings,
Kindling the air with deep vibrations, like
The endless shudder of a mighty chord,
Or thunder league on league away, and heard
At midnight faint and low. It seems as though
A secret, sudden instinct shadow'd him,
And warn'd him of a God. And now he stands,
Listening the voice of the Immortal—sweet
As melody that draws forth loving tears—
Upon the utmost border of that land,
And looks far forth, as one who veils his eyes
From sunlight thrown up from a dazzling sea,
That he may see the clearer; and the God
Touches with his bright hand the traveller's eyes,
And far things are brought near. He seems to see
A world-wide empire, gather'd into bounds
Of one fair valley, such the overflow
Of things majestic, bright and beautiful.
The aerial abysses, and the shapes,
Cloudlike, of mountains curtain round, and shield
The riches of the valley, laid with rows
Of sun-smit columns, graven temples, tall
Towers, and broad-based pyramids, that rise
Thro' quivering lights, and silence, from the depths
Of breathing gardens dark with odorous bowers,
Into the purple of the morn, and take,
Upon their fronts and summits, the first flash
Of day like stars. And there were arches, spanning

The dimpled rivers, that inverted all
The carven structures with their open doors,
Imaged therein ; and he may see afar,
Looking across that valley toward the hills,
High terraced lawns that stepp'd into a lake
Of azure sheen, a cup of clear cold dews
Fresh from the peaks of snow ; a crystal clear,
That drew the trembling shadows of the trees
And dove-wing'd clouds of summer. 'Tis a land,
Where lovely shows respond to loving hearts,
And Man and Nature are twin souls that pulse,
Like golden chords in living unison.

XV

" Again the vision changes, and the God
Touches with his bright hand the traveller's eyes,
And far things are brought near ; and he can see
Great multitudes upon a mountain plain,
Who stretch their arms rejoicing. They can see,
Descending thence, an army, ev'n of those
Who go forth conquering, but not with arms.
And each immortal of that mighty host
Bears in his hand a separate diadem,
To crown withal each mortal man below ;
To bring him with each added year a power ;
To deal him daily strength, and bliss, and hope ;
And in the endless conquests over Time
Aids him with his own might ; brings him swift thoughts

By day, and dreams and visions in the night,
Such as no mortal hath beheld, or shall
Behold, till that great day which is foredoom'd
To lead a march of triumph through all years !

XVI

“Then, on the other half, the artist strove
To tell us unimaginable things :
But woe belongs not to them, nor dismay.
Behold, as in an amphitheatre,
The whole world gather'd ; 'tis a hemisphere
Of living faces, whose astonished eyes
Gaze upward to another hemisphere
Of living faces ; but the latter live
No longer in this world. They stretch their arms
Each to the other ; and they seem to hold
Converse, in music new and wonderful ;
And interchange divine antiphonies,
As tho' they sang the very death of Death,
And Heaven and Earth were joining in the song !

XVII

“Such were the pictures on the ancient walls
I look'd on ; but the soul that breathed from them
Had reach'd my soul but dimly, had not he,
Interpreter and guide, revealed to me
The inner spirit of the silent forms.

So that, inspired by his prophetic voice,
Which gave them all his thought and poesy,
Methought, I added life and motion to them,
And fancy multiplied the artist's skill
By changes manifold, as when, in dream,
A simple action of the outer world
Becomes a world-within. I saw and heard
The Past and Future, as he spoke to me,
And all the dead, cold marbles glow'd with life.
These things by help of my far-seeing guide
I understood, and stored up in my mind.
And when his tongue was silent, and I thought
He would no more have spoken, suddenly
Lights, like twin stars, came up into his eyes,
Tho' he seem'd blind to all things outward, deaf
To every sound. He lifted up his arms,
And with a prophet's voice he cried aloud,
Looking across the illimitable sea.
'The great Atlantis shall arise again !
I stand upon the farthest promontory
Of an old world, and look across a main
Of purple waters endless ; what is this
I see before me ? For it seems no more
The restless, glancing ocean ; it grows calm,
Hush'd and immovable ; its colours change
With every moment, and the level plain
Is moulded into solid substance, shaped
Like hill and valley : heavens ! it is a world,
A newborn world ! The waters have gone down,

The earth hath risen once more ! but it is waste
And silent, no green thing hath blossom'd there,
And Man is not. Again I look upon
The selfsame, boundless region ; but it seems
A thousand years are gone, and all is changed.
The wilderness is clothed, the mountain-tops
Are plumed with forests ; but no column'd fanes
Are there, no sacred places ; all is still,
And beautiful, beneath the azure air,
As that old world, whereof the highpriest spake,
The selfsame surging woods, and golden vales,
Gardens and orchards ; founts, and curving streams,
And falling waters. Do I see once more
The imperial city, as it stood of old ?

It stands upon the selfsame mount and plain.
But where are the old bulwarks ? where the zones,
Alternately of land and sea, the walls,
And towers, once unassailable by man ?
The gates are open, and the harbours full,
And many nations throng the marts again,
As in old time. I hear the sound of songs,
And festal cheer, and not a voice is sad ;
All faces turn with faith upon each other ;
I mark no hateful frown, no angry word.
Where are the temples of the early Gods ?
Are they cast down dishonour'd ? Or do men
Behold their faces so familiarly,
That other worship is not needed now,
But loving faith that makes obedience sure,

And scatters phantoms of o'ershadowing fears,
That lead the weak to folly, so that they,
That tremble for their guilt, will sooner strive
To cheat with a vain show the very Gods,
Who judge the earth, than think upon their deeds ?
Where are the armed hosts that pass'd of old,
Out of the gates into the morning plain,
With thunderous tread, and lightnings, and the sound
Of lifted standards, and of flowing songs ?
Where they, who laugh'd and sang, when others wept ?
I hear the music, and I see the pomp,
As in the days before ; but it is life,
Not death, that calls for triumph ; and the love
Of many for their few, those kings of men
Whose crowns are loving thoughts, and gentle deeds ;
Who rule their kind by serving them the best ;
Who give them life from their own living souls,
As the blest sun the thankful earth at morn.
The great Atlantis shall arise again !
And yet, methinks, it is not that of old.
Impulsive moods, and eager hopes have pass'd
Into serenest noon of peaceful thought.
Simplicity and innocence have clothed
Their youthful limbs in wisdom ; and the heart,
Earnest and pure, is fixed on high resolves,
And that pure heart so wedded to man's hand,
That what he wills he works, and what he works
He wills ; no dissonance 'twixt thought and act,
As when sweet echoes, which sweet sounds beget,

Fall back, and join themselves unto the sounds.
The great Atlantis shall arise again !
Oh ! still I hope, I dream, I look beyond
These vexed times, how long soe'er they last,
Unto a bright futurity, the dawn
Of unrelapsing æons, when the world
Without us, and the living world within,
Shall live their youth, a youthhood of all strength,
And beauty, like the form of him, who steps
At morning from his chamber, and throws back
His deep hair, and looks up with sunny eyes
Sunward ; and knows, before the end of day,
That, as the star unto the zenith runs,
So he shall do great deeds, and win the praise
Of thousands upon thousands, and shall hear
The music and the shouting in his ears,
And gain him countless welcomes, and a crown !
That day shall open with the end of wars ;
That day shall see the nations flock together ;
And every hand shall fetch with loving care
Some serviceable stone, or precious gem,
To build into the pyramid of peace.
And, as the young man, full of love and light,
At peace with all, and concord with himself,
Is radiant outward, and delights the hearts
Of others, and takes back the love he gives ;
So the whole world that shall be—each to all,
And all to each breathing goodwill—shall weld
With sympathetic ardour, swift and sure,

Issues of all things godlike, noblest arts,
 And faultless science. For the Gods shall bend
 From heaven to hark the pæans of the earth ;
 And join the banquets of abundant powers,
 And waxing wonders ; and themselves shall speed
 The work of mortals, till one day shall grow
 More fruit than many years of this sad time.
 And Man himself, in wisdom as a God,
 Shall talk with the Immortals, and shall hear,
 And see the things of the Eternal Life.

XVIII

"The day that wanderer from the Eastern clime
 Had ended all this wondrous handiwork,
 He call'd the wise together, and he said ;
 'I have depicted by archaic Art,
 And bodied in imperishable form,
 What is recorded in the mystic lore,
 And dateless revelations of old Time.
 But whether all be true, or but a part,
 I know not ; only He who sleepeth not,
 Whom walls of Space and Time imprison not,
 Can fully grasp the Future and the Past.
 Oft have I told ye whence I came, and oft
 Have own'd the ancients of this realm of yours,
 Mine ancestors. To other lands they pass'd,
 And bore with them their wisdom and their skill
 In knowledges and arts ; yea, we have grown

All stately flowers from that same goodly seed,
Rivals of all the best we left behind.
Whereof I leave ye—for I know I die—
This long-wrought, now consummate work. I die
With something of a melancholy joy,
To think I leave ye that may bring delight
To look on ! and a knowledge, and a power
To follow me in paths, where long ago
Your own forefathers led us ; so I pay
Back the great gift of good they have bestow'd,
With something of a warning to your souls
That ye may flee, if this be possible,
The coming night of evil o'er the earth,
The shadow of whose wings myself have seen.
For, O my friends, believe a dying man
Whose ears have heard the whispers of the Gods,
That watch about the world. The time is nigh
When Evil, like a night that hath no morn,
Shall pall the world—but I shall be away—’
Ev'n while he spake his trembling accents faint
Answer'd not to the brightness in his eye,
But he pursued, ‘When I am flown afar,
Forget not all my words, tho' ye no more
Remember me. But oh ! if that I fear
Should fall on this blest region, as on ours,
And I, a living man, were with ye still,
Rather than see it wasting, like a fire,
That from a little spark grows more and more,
Into a sea of flame, oh ! liefer I

Would cry to the Immortals night and morn,
Would call on the great Gods, to make all vain
The wrath of man, and under the deep sea
Lay my dear country with its hills and streams,
Lay me, and mine, and all I hear and see
Around me, ay, ev'n all I love the best,
And bid the waters save us from the fire !'
He spake no more, and slowly in his eyes
Were quench'd the twin stars of his love and truth.
And with grey finger, pointing to the wall,
Whence frown'd the endless battle, he breath'd out
His spirit, and they wept for him in vain ;
For none remember'd those foredooming words,
Till the last dreadful night that made them true.'

XIX

" Again the morning rose on our farewell ;
The sails were set, the anchor was updrawn.
The sea-walls of the city, as before,
The towers and ramparts, throng'd with living forms,
Silent as memory's ghostlike images,
Phantasms we only seem to see and hear ;
Dead shadows of things quick and vital once.
We saw them lift their arms into the air,
And wave farewell ; but not a voice was heard,
Save of our men, and ev'n that was low,
As tho' their hearts were loth to leave that home
Of peace and beauty, for the stormy clime

Of the great world without. Then, round the walls
Of the weird city, rose a choral strain,
Solemn and sweet, and floated o'er the sea,
As tho' the guardian spirits of the place
Bad us turn back to it, and look again
Once more, but once, upon that lovely land,
As one may look upon a dying face
No eye shall see again for evermore.

We felt as tho' we shook off with the morn
Imagin'd joys, which Hecate and Night
Mock our sad days withal—the haggard cares
That meet us at the gate—and pass'd with sighs
Among the warring hosts of mortal men.

The sea was calm, blue as the cloudless air ;
Unwillingly the sleepy zephyrs breathed ;
Our slumbrous bark crept through a slumbrous sea.
All day we kept the western isle in view ;
Slowly it seem'd to sink, that fairy isle,
Under the cruel waters, as of old
The Motherland ; and still we seem'd to hear
The silver sweetness of the parting song,
Fainter and fainter, till at eventide
The enchanting mystery of sight and sound
Drown'd in the flaming west from whence it rose.

Again the wind sprang up, and snatch'd away
Our bark thro' starlight onward to the east ;
And seem'd to warn us with its freshening voice
To look no more for ever on the past.

Beneath the stars I thought of the weird isle

That seem'd to vanish ; did it only seem ?
I know not ; but the story that I told
Stirr'd many more to venture after me
Across the western waves ; but nevermore
Was found that land of melancholy souls.
Did the fair island follow in the wake
Of the first drowned world, as 'twere a child,
Call'd by its mother's ghost, or little bark
Drawn under by the rolling of a wreck ?
I know not ; but when years and cares had dimm'd
Its first bright image in my heart, methought,
I must have dreamt it only, and the dream,
More wonderful than other ghosts of sleep,
Ruled o'er me, like an earthly memory first,
And then dissolv'd into its elements,
Old tales, and phantasies, at work to pour
Their warm breath and their rainbow colours on
Grey dust and ashes. Oh ! I know not now,
But fain would deem, like weary wayfarers,
The magic waters in the wilderness
Real, tho' they flee before me ; fain would take
The gardens, and the temples, and the towers,
Wove of thin air and sunshine, for the home
Of beings, nobler than the sons of men,
A city builded of pure gold and pearl.
And, if no eye had seen so fair a world,
This let me dream some unborn age may see.'
Thus did my grandsire speak, the mariner bold."

HALCYONE

I

THE King sat gazing on the Autumnal sea,
His brow upon his hand, and in his eye
The evening twilights deepen'd into night
Sombre, and sorrowful ; hard by the wind
Moan'd thro' some clambering rosebriers, that had shed
Their Summer leaves, and whispering answer made,
Like sympathetic sorrow ; for oh ! his thoughts
Were of those ills that had befallen him.
The shadow of the Supernatural Powers
Hung o'er him, like yon slowly shaping cloud,
And on his household ; first his brother's doom ;
Chione's death, his niece ; and the dread signs,
And wonders, that had gone before that day,
And follow'd it. Far off the lightning scroll'd
The gathering rack and darkness with weird symbols
Of sudden fatal ruin, and low thunder
Roll'd, like the voice of a gigantic foe,
Advancing to o'erwhelm the hapless king,
And queen, that very night, and bury them
Under the fragments of their palace walls !

And the air shudder'd at the shock ; the doors
Trembled, as with an earthquake, and he sigh'd
Again, and whisper'd ;—“ Oh that I could tell
The hidden years ; unravel—as the flash,
Threading those clouds, shows me their awful shapes—
The mystery of the Future ! so would I
Go forth to meet the purpose of the Gods,
And tame the eager hope, and love of life
To peaceful patience ; and take off the point
Of Death's worst arrows, by imagining
All dooms most hateful and most horrible ;
So that at last I would go down to him
Tearless, and with a triumph on my lips.
Wherefore are They against me ? Have I done
Aught that might anger them of late ? They know
I have forgone the pomps and pride of youth ;
The follies of the crowd I have rebuked,
Whose voices, false as hissing serpents, led me
Even to such self-worship, as becomes
No earth-born man, although he be a king.
They shouted one day in the temple gate—
‘ Behold a God ! ’tis Jove himself come down !
His dark locks, and his large illumined eyes !
His stature, and his step majestic !
Behold a God indeed ! a very God !’
If I remember that my soul was glad
Within me ; that my heart beat, as the sea
Heaves to the summer wind, whose pleasant strength
Shall dash it on the rocks ; I too remember

That, many an after day, I have repined,
And beat my breast, and wept to think of it.
Vainglorious dreams have shed away their plumes.
And now, instead of pride to madness spurr'd,
My mood is sad humility ; my hope
To do as one, who is a King, should do ;
Shine, as a sun, upon his fatherland ;
Joy with the joyful ; weep with those who weep ;
Amend the wintry fortunes of the poor ;
Abase the proud, redress the innocent.

I call the Gods to witness, that, if I
Have mock'd them madly, I have served them wisely.
Through all these earnest days of joy and pain
Thou, dearest one, hast been my staff and stay,
My own Halcyone—the loving heart
In lovely form—but something, something still
Whispers my inmost soul that all is not
Finish'd of Evil. Hark ! the thunder speaks
In answer to my thoughts ! a darker day
Threatens, than any that have gone before !
Looms like the tempest yonder, that shall burst
Where none are watching, in the middle night ;
And some one shall awaken, and cry out,
'Woe ! woe ! the lightning-kindled fires are round us,
The strong towers of the citadel of Peace
Are falling earthward ! Open the great gates
Of Time, for all is lost ! Despair ! Despair !'"

II

The Queen came near, and with a dusky smile
Sweet-sorrowful, she said : " I heard thy voice,
Beloved, and I caught some murmuring words.
I know what thou art dreaming, oh ! I know
But, O beloved, be not to thyself
Too willing oracle of Good, or Ill ;
The Gods who doom are throned where no mists are,
Or, like the sun, they pierce them ; but, weak man,
Joy dazzles him, and sorrow dims his eyes ;
And oft, when he looks for a thunderbolt,
The clouds divide, and pour a sunbeam on him.
Oft, when the time is windless, clear, and soft,
An earthquake shakes the mountains from their seats !
Then, my beloved, be not to thyself
Deceiver ; nor beseech the Gods to give
Such knowledge of the Future, as would be
Fatal to freedom, as the sun would prove,
To those who dared to gaze upon it, death
Of eyesight ; thinkest thou that prowess comes
From looking on the evil yet to be ?
With every day that brings us nearer to it
The ghost of Hope, that,—while it was far off,
Yet smiled, and look'd like Hope herself—grows pale,
Paler, and palest, till she fades away.
For one sharp pang that strikes us unforeseen,
A thousand darts of anguish, hour by hour,
Vex the poor spirit ; many deaths are borne

For one, that comes and goes unlook'd for by us.
Take counsel ; better 'tis to walk with Hope
Thro' starless night, than thro' midnoon with Fear.
And, should the Ill to come be light as down
Borne from a thistle-head before the wind,
Forethought would make it as a rolling rock,
Dread phantasies will paint in fire and blood ;
And, piercing thro' the gloom of night, will see
The empty void fill'd in with dismal sights.
If it were told thee, that on such a day
A little child, a very little child
Would prick thy finger with the thorn of a rose—
In such a month, on such a day, and hour,
And moment—would not that month, day, and hour
And moment, and that very little child,
Grow in the eye of Fancy—as attention
Intenser, and intenser wax'd—till that,
Which in itself the little child would scorn,
Became a goblin, skulking in thy heart
To stop thy breath ? Why should we wake in darkness,
While others sleep and haply see good dreams ?
The year is dying ; all the summerdays
Are ended, and the tongues of many storms,
Like cohort upon cohort, I can hear,
Like multitudinous echoes of that peal
That thunders now. Tempt not the hungry sea,
Whose wintry anger may not spare a King.
And think of me, O dear one, wert thou lost ;
Of me imprison'd in these very towers,

Where I have power to prison others ; think,
If some hard Chief, usurper of thy rights,
Might cast me forth abandon'd, with wild hair,
And weeping eyes ; or if some stroke of doom
Should lay me low when thou art parted hence,
And thy great voice should call for me in vain ;
Thy homeward step but echo from these walls,
Not in mine ear, not in this faithful heart ;
No step of mine to meet thee hastening hither ;
No hand to take from thee thy helm and sword ;
Or serve to thee a draught of the old wine
As in the day of old—old days of youth—
The days ere sorrow fell upon this house.”

III

“ O wife, fain would I listen to thy voice
For ever,” he said, “ it speaks to me of love,
And loving-kindness, better than all gauds
That dazzle poor men’s eyes, when they behold
The glory of a King, and his great state,
Which they mistake for blisses. For the poor
Are blessed more than many mighty Kings,
If only for this boon, that they may sleep
In fearless peace, claspt in each other’s arms,
And look into their cup, that brims with pure
Spring-drops, and fear no poison ; and be sure
That tender words are true ; and no loud sound—
Like brazen cymbals drowning silver strings—

Of flattery leaves the heart a malcontent,
Spite of their lavish lips ; and, were it not
That thou and I are faithful as the poor,
'Twere better to exchange our state for theirs.
But oh ! I may not listen to thee now,
Nor drink thy golden words into my heart—
True to thee ever, even when it rebels—
That are the same that I have ever heard ;
And years and sorrows have not dried the fount
Of that sweet speech right from thy woman's heart,
For ever true, save when it pleads in vain
To Conscience, deafer than poor Love is blind.
Thou too art deaf to all except thy fears ;
And I were blind to pore into the dark,
Without the lamp of Heaven. Oh pardon me,
Who prize thine every word, as though it were
A separate note of music, if in this
I yield not to thee ; if I listen not
To one, who bids me wander in the night—
Peopling it with all those dismal shapes,
Which thou wouldest warn me are begot of Faith,
But which I tell thee are the brood of Doubt—
When I may walk beneath the sun of day,
And from the sacred shrine receive the note
Of certainty ; who in my sorrows rest
Unsatisfied, and thro' the twilight dim
See phantoms, worse than if my doom were death
Proclaim'd—the hour when no escape can be,
Save that which frees us from both doubt and fear.

For fear is phantasy, and mortals arm
Against mortality, when they behold
Their last great enemy ; and, when he thinks
To strike them down, they cast him under them,
Lifting their heads up to the light of morn ;
Scattering before them the abhorred shapes
Of superstitions, as the mountain-tops,
Smit with the dawn, fling off the shrouding mists
And roll them under. Else, could men go forth
To die in battle, who would shake at home
To hear the whisper of a dead man's voice,
Less fearful than the buzzing of a fly ?
And feel the warm blood that they freely shed
Freeze at the thought of that where no blood is !
But is all dark because thy soul is sad,
Halcyone ? Bethink thee, gentle wife,
That, when the storms are over, comes the Spring,
And sunbright hours ; that we have suffer'd much,
And more than others ; will they not relent,
Who have afflicted us, and send us days,
Like vintage clusters following the scant sheaves
Of burnt-up harvests ? Better Hope than Fear.
And listen, dearest, I will combat thee
With thine own arms ; remember thy own words :
*'Take counsel ; better 'tis to walk with Hope
Thro' starless night, than thro' midnoon with Fear.'*"

IV

In the last days, ere parting, the sad queen
Said to herself : " I only know him now.
How hath my heart been hidden from itself !
And love, my life, a stranger to itself.
For what is all that I have felt before
But something dreamt of, rather than fulfill'd ?
As for a moment, ere the tempest bursts,
The dying sun strikes through a cloud, and breathes
A sudden light and heat upon the earth,
Unfelt before, and kindles by contrast
The lovely slopes and valleys into joy,
Beauty, and glory, unsurpassable !"
Now, now she seem'd to look into the mind
And heart of him she loved, with surer light,
And knowledge until then unknown. She saw
His form heroical, that stood before her,
As though it never met her eyes till now,
Or she had never seen him as she ought.
Memory became a tablet magical—
A mirror wrought so bright, that hues and forms,
Tho' less, seem'd greater than Reality—
Whereon his slightest humours were imprest,
Motions, and utterances : a smile became
A picture drawn for ever ; a passing sigh,
A tone of sorrow, or a tender word,
Sank deep down to the secret well of tears
Within her heart, henceforth,—she felt, she knew—

To draw up never-failing urns of grief.
And, when he took the harp into his hand,
And the even-feast was o'er, and the sunk sun
Still burn'd along the West, and the day birds
Were hushed in all the copses, and he sang
Those deep but merry notes, that he was wont
After their supper in the days gone by,
The song, tho' full of mirth, rose to her ear
Thro' mists of melancholy ; and it seem'd
That very song, jocund, and jubilant,
Would surely come back, in the days to come,
Rising from out the slowly ebbing past
Sad as the low tide, or triumphant shouts
Of some great host, upon a festal day,
Sweeten'd by distance to a solemn hymn.
The echoes of it in her heart would dwell
For ever, and would melt into its core
More than the actual—Music is a king
That rules with tenfold tyranny in the heart,
More than the ear—and would for ever grow
The pale ambrosia of her widow'd hours.

V

While he was not yet gone, and wander'd still
About the house, and she could see him still
At morn and even, apprehensive woe
Was not yet real—the parting had not come—
Mayhap it might not be : how swiftly fled

The hours ; how precious every little word,
Every last smile ; and how one single tone
That was not perfect-kind—such as her heart
Thirsted for—pierced like steel, and drew her tears !
Though at no other moment would her ear
Have felt the change, nor the heart heeded it.
O Life ! O Time ! 'tis then that ye are fearful.
O vast, wide world ! O Space, that swiftest wings
Take time to traverse ; 'tis in such a time
Thou art most dreadful ! Partings worse than Death
When that is shared by lovers ! for is it not
Love's death in Life—worse than Love's Life in death—
That farewell, leaving in the heart no " Well,"
But baleful bodings, sighs, and bitter tears,
And aching anguish ? Then, tho' weigh'd within
With heaviness, her heart was never tired,
Her spirit never flagg'd. What cheer it was
To set fresh comforts, fresh delights about him !
To fill up the few fleeting tender days,
Ere the great shadow fell upon the house !
While he was musing o'er his stern resolve,
And saw but that alone, and nought between
Now and that fixed end, she fill'd the void
With fearful phantoms, pictures of her fear ;
But, stifling her own heart, and crushing down
Its apprehensions in her voice, she kept
Old notes of mirth, that he might not be chill'd
By such imaginations of despair.

VI

Alas ! alas ! that hour—the end of all,
However hidden under loving arts—
Would not be cheated of its future present.
One morning she woke first from sleep, wherein
She thought she rambled thro' green woods with him ;
Close by her side was he, and help'd her o'er
The tinkling freshets ; on they fared with glee,
Thro' shadowy coverts, breathing of young flowers,
And singing with the bees ; they trod the turf
Of mountain slopes, till on the top they stood
To see the sun rise—just as he came up
From out the sea—she woke, and it was true !
The sun was dazzling in her eyes—but he
Lay slumbering—then she awoke him too
With voice of seeming mirth, but with a heart
The morning could not solace. She awoke him ;
The time was lovely, and the wind was fair ;
No Summer morning ever was so sweet ;
But never Winter flowers more frozen were
Than her heart's motions. Oh ! the hour had come—
She scarce remember'd that the hour had come,
When it was on her—and, as one who moves
Swiftly thro' twilights of a painful dream,
Seeking to save his life, she sped her acts,
She bad him haste—the moments would not pause—
“Behold, the wind blows soft, is it not time
To lift the anchor, to unreef the sail,

Time for the mariners, loitering in the sun,
To give their last cheer, and to wave farewell?"
She mimick'd triumph to hold back her tears.
Ev'n when the swift embrace was o'er, while he
Yet hurried towards the gate, ev'n while she saw him
Stepping aboard, and when he kiss'd his hand
She did not weep; but oh! when she could see him
No more, no more—would it be nevermore?
Something like suffocation grappled her.
A sudden palsy, like the grip of Death,
Seized her, and her heart was like to burst,
Choked with a rushing torrent, chain'd till then.
A mighty weight sank down upon her, dread,
Immovable, an endless widowhood;
A cloud like instant blindness seem'd to press
Upon her eyeballs, and shut out the world;
Her life was failing, she fell to the earth,
And light, with thought, forsook her, as she lay.

VII

But, when the days of weeping were gone by,
And the sad lull of her exhausted grief
Sank, like a twilight, on her, the old walks,
The long familiar places, drew her steps
And woo'd her to them. Often, so unchanged
Were all things round her—but that he was not—
That, as she listen'd to familiar tongues,
The murmurs of the household, and the stir

Of Day, with breezy lights and quivering leaves,
The birds that flutter'd past in little clouds,
The ringing of the fountain on the green,
The rustle of the cypresses and planes,
And the low music of the Summer sea,
She stood awhile, and waited for his voice.
In passing by their bridal-chamber door,
That stood ajar, she dreamt, a moment's space,
That she should see him there ; as, oft, of old,
She had beheld him, when at early morn,
Returning from the orchard, in her hand
The fresh fruits blooming, and still pearl'd with dew,
Ere yet the nightingale had ceased her song,
Just as the blackbird and the thrush began
To drown her golden solitary voice,
That, as the Day wax'd, seem'd to weep farewell,
With melodies of greeting, she look'd in,
In passing, saw him still in slumber laid,
His dark hair flowing over his lax arm,
A lingering smile upon his dreamy lips,
And blessing him pass'd on, and was content.
And now again she pass'd the door ajar.
All things within were even as they had been ;
And a child's fancy, half akin to hope,
Possess'd her. What, if she should see him now
Stretch'd, as of old, and all the painful past
Only a dream ? She knew her thought was vain,
Fantastic—yet she turn'd to look—alas !
He was not there, and she shed foolish tears.

Sometimes a mood came o'er her, startling her,
Like fatal tidings ; how was it that she
Had mourn'd for him alive, as for one dead ?
Was her great grief a prophecy ? a voice
Sensed in a dream, the sound of which awakes
The sleeper, and 'tis true what he had dreamt ?
She moved from out the shadow of that thought
Into a growing dawn of hope again.

Days, months were gone, and soon a year would be.
Why were those days and months so seeming-dead,
But, like the drowsy winter, to bring back
The long-lost blossom in a night ? She thought
She saw him sailing shoreward ; hark ! the cry
Of many voices, see uplifted hands ;
How slow the motion, how unkind the winds !
Speed then, heart-love, and draw them faster on.
The land is reach'd, the sail is furl'd, the bark
Lets fall its anchor, and he steps on shore !
And she is there ! no, she is hid awhile
Behind the lattice of an upper room,
To dry her happy tears, ere she runs down
Swift, as an eagle dropping from the sun,
To clasp him, and he bends his head o'er hers,
In silence, and then murmurs, "Nevermore
To part," as she had whisper'd heretofore,
"Nevermore to return"; and that death-word,
Like one arisen from death, was glorified.
So living-sweet that vision in the sight
Of her mind's eye, it seem'd no peril, or fear,

No phantasy, no boding could o'ercast
The sunny picture ; and she laugh'd aloud,
And forward stept to fold him in her arms !
Such glory, like the storm-gleam, is a threat
Soon follow'd by the storm. Ah ! better far
Had the first sadness frozen more and more,
Little and little, till her heart had ceased.
Better, if those fond creatures never more
Had utter'd note of welcome, and had chill'd
Aught like to mirth in her, as blasphemy
Against the awful Future. But 'tis so,
That oftentimes Good and Ill are shown to us
By opposites ; a weird and breathless calm
Heralds the earthquake, or the hurricane ;
Anon the world-confounding tempest is
The lifting of a mighty curtain drawn
Across fair days, weeks, months of Summer-time ;
And all this joy that sprang up in her heart
Was but the pale laugh of the haggard Three,
Already by the threshold holding forth
The scissors and the thread in bloodless hands !
As the first cold of Winter is most drear,
And custom reconciles the frame to bear
The blustering snows, and eager mountain flaws,
So many days, and hope within the heart—
Best gift of the Immortals—takes away
The edge of sorrows : little atoms build
By day and night the tender lily of Spring ;
And secret, trackless motions raise again

The magic palace of immortal Hope.
So she began to comfort her ; she sang
To her tame birds again ; they answer'd her ;
As though her kindling cheer rekindled theirs
Long widow'd of it ; and the great old hound,
That had grown thin, and whimper'd in his dreams,
Ev'n wagg'd his tail, and seem'd to hear the voice
Of her own soul, and look'd into her face ;
Then gave a bound and rushed out thro' the door,
Making the crags, and cliffs, and caverns hoarse
With echoes of his glee. That night she pass'd
To her lone chamber, with an infant's hope
For a bright morrow : and she dreamt he came
And stood before her. "O my love," she said,
"Wherefore so pale?" and he, "O dearest one,
I come for thee ; the ways were long and waste,
And wearisome ; o'er mountain paths I toil'd,
And thro' dark glens ; by forests, dark and dread,
Howling with savage creatures, I have pass'd,
And stumbled over twilight wilderness ;
And sometimes when I thought to cross dryfoot
The rough bed of a river, came the roar
Of waters from behind the mountain-walls,
And sudden swirling of a torrent, cloven
With drowning arms flung up, and shrieks and cries
Of multitudes o'erwhelm'd ; and voices wail'd,
'Go back ; wilt thou forsake the glad new world,
Where thou art king o'er blissful realms, more fair
Than if the fairest gardens of the Earth

Were plukt to make an Eden for thee? wait,
And she will seek thee; or perchance the love
Of the old things may forfeit thee the bliss
Of the great Life Immortal.' " Here he ceased;
And as a pale cloud vanish'd; but she thought
She heard them call to him thro' shrilling winds,
And plunging waters, faint and far away.

VIII

He stretch'd his arms at parting, and she wept.
And with that anguish she awoke, and saw
The last torn banners of a tempest rent,
And shatter'd in the sunrise; and she cried—
" The Gods be thank'd that visions of the Night,
Like yonder dismal storm-clouds, are dissolv'd,
And vanish in the bliss of Day; or I
Had liefer wake from sleep no more at all,
So I might follow wheresoe'er he goes."
Yet, tho' the skies were laughing golden-bright,
The winds still raved, the waters roll'd, and made
A choral hymn together, like the tongue
Of world-wide hosts lamenting all things lost;
Or she had surely heard, between the sound
Of winds and waters, something still more dread,
Men's voices mourning, women weeping sore;
And then again the plunging of the seas,
The shriek of the mad winds. She rose, she ran,
Like one prepared to front some terror, worse

Than all imagined ill ; and it was so.
Close by the edge of the tall surges lay,
Half hidden by a crowd, whose eager eyes
Were bending stilly o'er it, a still form.
The crowd drew back as she advanced ; some bow'd
Their heads in silence, some broke forth in wails,
And sobs ; but all turn'd to her, and stretch'd their arms
Behind them towards the terror ; and she stood,
The centre of that circle, now become
Hush'd as the death before her ; and what death ?
Was it some aged fisher, friend of all,
Leaving a widow'd wife, and hungry babes ?
Some hapless stranger from an unknown land ?
Some fair youth, just about to wed, and cast
Before the eyes of his betrothed one ?
Some messenger from kings beyond the seas ?
When first she stood beside it she could see
Only a pale thing, hidden under coils
Of tangled salt-weed, and the face was turn'd
And press'd the shore ; one hand had scrawl'd the sand
As with a last fierce agony, and his hair
Lay over his bared shoulders, softly stirr'd
By the sea-wind. She bad them raise him up ;
And soon again she knew the well-known face,
The kingly brows, like heaven, illumined once
As by two suns, those large eyes, set in night
For ever ; the broad breast, and ebon locks ;
The warrior's stalwart arm, the sceptral hand
Comely yet mighty. Then her answer came—

" My God ! " she utter'd with a mighty cry,
" It is your king, the king of all this land ! "

Then went there up to heaven a shrill lament
Of the poor fishers, hush'd and meek till then ;
And knowledge in a moment came to them,
As when a mighty wind beats back the doors
Of their lone dwellings by the sea, the while
A lightning flash lights up all things within.
For now, in bending o'er him, they beheld
Him whom they oft had gazed on robed and crown'd.
Was this the man they had seen in scarlet clad ?
This poor, afflicted, marr'd and moveless form ?
Up to the palace walls that mighty cry
Of woe ascended ; and the cliffs and shores
Made answer to it, and the weltering seas
Bore it in lengthening lamentations down
The winding beach ; she knew not what befell !
A hush'd, void interval of utter night
Wrapt her, wherein nor hope, nor memory shone ;
And when she woke, she saw the mournful crowd
Had parted, and again she was alone.

IX

Then was she free to wing her woe with words.
But she is calm, as in her arms she held
That well-loved head—now dark, with lampless eyes,
A night, without a star—and to and fro
She rock'd him, like a babe we lull to sleep,

So haply she might wake him ; for that face,
Now turn'd unto the sun, seem'd so serene,
So painless sweet, that surely this was sleep.
For is not Death a fearful thing to see ?
And lo ! as by a charm, divinely wrought
By the good Gods, in pity for her state,
Her phantasy, that would have wrapt her round
With ever-deepening shadows of despair,
And made her woe vast as a thunder-cloud,
Took a sweet change, and suddenly became
As 'twere the rainbow on it ; and she laugh'd,
And laid her hand among his curls, and spoke
Her last wild words with utterance like to song.
“ Oh wake ! wake ! my beloved ; it is morn.
Look how the halcyon skims the azure coves,
Whose waves are calm ; the wildflowers in the rocks
Lift up their dewy eyes to this new day !
Look, how the sun makes rainbows, as the seas
Draw back, and leave a mirror on the sands !
Down from the uplands, quivering with the tears
Of the last night, the rippling rilles fall
With tongues, like argent bells. What ! wilt thou sleep,
Love, yet awhile ? Then dream such pleasant dreams,
As shall delight me, when at noon we moor
Our boat in some sweet haven blue and calm ;
Where, leaning o'er the side, we shall look down
Thro' purest hyaline, and see beneath
Smooth sands of golden grain, a mirror fair
That shall make pictures of us ; and sea-forms,

Catching the sunlight on their pearled coats,
Shall flash, like fire-tongues, from the watery deeps,
And hide them in cool shadows of our cave.
For oh ! we will sail forth this summerday,
And wind among green islets until even ;
And feast with water-gods, and be attended
By sea-nymphs, serving us in coral cups
Drinks, that shall bubble o'er the rosy marge,
Like the full tide that flings its sparkles up
O'er the beach, kindling in the crimson East.
And I will tell thee too how I have dreamt
A weary dream—too woful to be told—
But I must tell it thee, dear heart, to-day.
For now I see thee lying by my side
Once more, and sorrow's self is changed to joy—
The thistle blossom'd with a purple flower—
And thou, methought, my life, hadst fled away,
Forsaken me, and none could tell me where ;
Hadst flown thro' perils to the utmost bourne
Of all this world, to seek forbidden lore,
To search out the dark Future, while To-day
With all its idle wealth was left to me—
Like a big jewel to a beggar blind
Who would give all to see the light again—
Bootless to me, when thou, my light, wert not.
Yet I had hope—hope never left me, dear,—
That thou wouldst turn again ; that winds, and clouds,
And threatful seas would scatter at thy word,
And lull, before the light of that true love,

The sun that rises fair, and sets in peace.
And here thou art : but wake ! the sun is high.
I hear the murmur from the city marts,
The sound of wheels, the clang of hoofs ; warm Day
Cheers the great palace, and the prison lone,
And gilds the lowly hovel ; the very dust,
That curls, and flies above the horses' manes,
Sun-smitten glows like mingled smoke and flame.
All things are waking ; wilt thou not awake,
And taste the freshness of the morn, ere yet
The redrose springs from underneath the weight
Of the full dew-drop ?—hush, what do I say ?
Thou art aweary, thou hast wandered far ;
But thou art here again, ah ! thou art here.
Is that not comfort, bliss enough to make
Ev'n madness patient ? Thou hadst toil and pain
To battle with ; rest now. I will not speak,
But in a whisper, but that whisper low
Shall breathe into thine ear a thousand sweets,
Such as no tongue but mine could scatter there.”
Then, bending low, she kiss'd him on the brow,
Cold, marble-cold ; she started back ; she pass'd
Her hand across her eyes, as one who wakes.
Then, with a last dread agonizing cry,
She flung her arms above her head—“ Dead ! dead !
Dead !”

X

On the morrow morn the seas were calm.
The winds had fallen ; only the low moan
Of the tired waters, like remorseful sighs
Of weary vengeance, rose and fell among
The rocks ; the nearer ripples gush'd between,
As 'twere a voice of weeping : but the morn
Was fair. New life was in the lovely world,
A peaceful bliss of sunlit azure skies,
Brisk airs, and twinkling leaves, and breathing flowers.
But where were they who, but a year ago,
Had walk'd those shores, stroll'd under the deep shade
Of overhanging gardens, sung together
In the clear twilight, or the sweet May-morn ?
Here, underneath the domed central hall
Of their ancestral towers, two youthful forms,
Their dark locks diadem'd, and in their hands
Twin lilies snowy-white ; their eyes are closed
For ever, but a lovely peace is throned
On lip and brow ; the troubles, that had writ
Too early lines of sorrow on their cheeks,
Seem'd charm'd away by some diviner hand
In this last hour of Time ; they almost smiled.
A holy quiet fill'd the place ; for awe
Hush'd lamentable tongues, and stay'd the tears
Of women, while the echoes of the waves
Wander'd around, and quavering sunlights struck
From the near waters up against the roof,

And gambol'd there. At last a minstrel came.
He touch'd his harp, and with a golden voice
He sang the praise of those who had done good ;
He sang the loves of those who were no more ;
Their ancient stem, their glory and their power ;
Their early sorrows, and their timeless fate.

“ Farewell ”—he said—“ I would I were as ye.
For, now the cloud of ill hath roll'd away,
Your hearts—twin stars—are seen in heaven together.
Joy not, ye Evil, that a kingly crown
Is laid aside ; that nought remains of all
Ye fear'd, Dominion, Judgment, armed Strength, .
That held in mortal hands the lives of men ;
If ye lose Mercy, have ye lost a foe !

Weep not, ye Just, that he your friend is not ;
Tho' what ye look on now is but a shell,
A casket rifled of its precious wealth,
The bright joy in the eye, the thought that moved
The lip, the kindly voice that breathed the heart.
What, if the twain, who ruled so wisely here,
Have power to guide ye better on the seats
They rule from now ? What, if your hearts, so oft
Hidden on earth, are open to them there ;
And they can lavish on ye dews of hope,
And with sweet consolations feed your hearts
And all good things—better than all they gave
Ye heretofore—more precious than the past ? ”
And, when he ended, all the multitude
Sang a low hymn, which the sea-waters join'd

In symphony ; sadly it died away,
And there was silence. Then another sound,
A flutter of quick wings, and lo ! two birds,
With plumes, that glanced all colours in the light.
Up from the waves those rainbow-pictured forms
Rose, glittering round and round the marble hall
In ever-narrowing circles, and at last
Hover'd above the pale brows of the dead ;
And then they parted with a joyful sound,
And flew back to the waters, skimming soft
The azure surface of a quiet cove
Between the rocks, and vanish'd as they came.
But all eyes follow'd ; and the Minstrel spoke—
His dark eye bright, a smile upon his lips—
“ Think ye, O friends, that these beloved ones
Will soon be dust, and mingle with the earth,
Won back to Nature to be lost to Life ?
What, if their loving spirits came to us
On fair birds' wings, and dwell among us still,
In radiant forms ? ” And then he bended o'er them,
Sighing, “ Farewell, farewell ! ” What made him start ?
Hears he within his soul, whose finer chords
Had been attuned ev'n from his earliest years
To commune with high spirits, the low tones
That answer'd him ? “ And what if we are here,
In our own forms made godlike, and look down
On the old mortal tabernacle, changed
For an immortal temple ? and henceforth
Are near, to soothe, to counsel, to command,

To breathe strength in the erring, hope to fears,
And solace to the downcast ; and remain—
Once call'd by the high names of King and Queen—
Your ministers, to serve ye better now
Than ever ye served us ? Oh ! hear ye not
Our voices ? ” But they heard them not, save one :
The Immortals could behold Mortality,
Thé Mortals could not know the Immortal ones.

PSYCHE

I

THE Summerday was dying into Even,
When Psyche, beautiful as any flower,
Psyche the young, the pious, and the piteous,
Dear to the King, and dearer to the clown,
Whose smile to all that teeming countryside
Was welcome, as the day unto the earth,
Her words as fresh cool springs to eager lips,
Turn'd homeward, mirth and garlands on her brow,
And blessings round her steps. For oft she spoke
Kind words unto the sunburnt vintagers
In matin wanderings thro' the vinerows green ;
She knew the cottars and their thrifty ways ;
She call'd their little children by their names ;
And she dropt comfort into poor men's hands ;
She help'd the widow with the ready cruse ;
She stay'd the sick with flasks, she sat beside
The lowly bed of misery and pain,
Breathed hope into the ears of the forlorn,
Cheer'd the faint babe, and listen'd to the words

Of grave old men. Ah ! sure she went and came
On ministries of mercy, like a Nymph,
And left a light upon deserted hearths,
And in dejected hearts, and bended low
Her princely state and made it kiss affliction ;
So that the proud, who hated pride, yet scorn'd her
For her humility ; but others loved her
More than their daughters. Psyche, with her maids,
Came laughing from the noisy festival,
Her ears still ringing with the festal songs,
Her rose-wreathed temples reeling with the dance,
Clomb to her bower, a chamber cool and still,
And breathing all of faded garden sweets,
Jasmin, and vervains, and old lavender,
And savory herbs, that lay together crush'd
In some tall vases, wrought with cunning shapes
Of Dian and her Wood-nymphs, gone to meet
Pan with his Fauns. And you might see from thence,
Wandering adown a slope of yellow vines,
Into a quiet valley, dark with tufts
Of ancient pines, that rose amid a bower
Of Summer trees, beyond, a river, curving
Far off into the dews and moonlit mist,
Was lost atwixt the horns of two grey hills.
Jocund she came. Ah ! sure the marble stair
Had never echoed to a sweeter sound
Than her light footfall, glowing with her play,
Her sandals sprent with green herbs, and the red,
And golden blossoms strown along the ways,

For it had been a Summer holiday,
And all the folk had come from far and near,
In honour of the morn ; and some had brought
Gifts to the shrine ; and some had laid the earth
With fresh buds, flung from panniers piled with Spring.
Some weary roses, fallen from her wreath,
Lay tangled in her hair, and in her hand
A branch of wild fruits, gather'd from the woods,
Drooping. She sigh'd a little happy sigh
Drawn from a long, fair Summerday of mirth ;
And from a little eager spring, that gush'd
Into an alabaster conch, and fill'd
The odorous chamber with a low sweet chime,
She brimm'd a cup, and quaff'd it all athirst,
Ere well the bubbles, twinkling in the moon,
Had burst away. And then from overhead,
Smiling, she took a little lovely lyre,
A royal birthday gift, four silver strings,
That wept themselves down from a golden grot
Into two slumbering Naiads' golden arms ;
And wedded it to her delighted voice,
Whose pure clear joy was holy as a prayer,
Through a rare song, a song of ancient days,
A song of Spring, a song of mountains green,
Of Love, of Freedom, and of Victory.
And when she ceased a hundred unseen Loves
Throng'd the slant moonbeam, striving with each other
For the last note, to waft it up to heaven !

II

She ceased ; and solitude, that echoed not
Her playful thoughts, began to shadow her
With soft regrets ; the silence sadden'd her,
And memories sank like twilight on her soul.
Ah me ! I fear the sigh that Psyche breathed
Was not all born of overweariness,
Nor was it the sweet death of too much mirth.
It said—for Psyche utter'd not her thoughts,
Haply unmindful of the mood she bore,
And would have chid her conscience for such dreams
And idle pinings, had she own'd to them—
But in that sigh there was a subtle voice ;
It said, “I would I were not left alone
This blissful moonlight hour ; in such a time
Twin voices feed each other's tenderness,
Fair fancies fly into each other's arms,
And lovely thoughts are married to each other.
Methinks my damsels, that be lowly born,
Are more akin to Nature than am I,
The firstfruits of whose heart are snatched away
By needy majesty. And one will walk
Under the shadows of the slumberous trees
And hear a voice she loves ; and one will sit
Beside the fountain and forget its chime,
While softer notes are trembling in her ears ;
But I am lonely in this kingly house ;
There is a softer than a father's kiss,

I would I were not only what I am" ;
With that she breathed again that truant sigh ;
And, in the spirit of that hush'd regret,
Pure as the starlit waters of a spring,
She leant her cheek against her arm, her brow
Upon the fainting blossoms in her hair.
That curved arm amid her loosed locks
Lay still, and glitter'd in the pure cold light,
Like sculpture, drooping o'er the marble slab
Whereon her lamp, a little silver barge,
Lit by a Nereid sitting in the prow,
Gleam'd, like an Autumn moon, upon the sea.
One dewy eyelid with its long dark fringe,
One half cheek kindled by the rose within
Shone o'er that blissful pillow as she lay,
And so she fell asleep.

III

Hush'd was the hour ;
Not yet the gold of the new-risen moon
Had changed to silver, and her peaceful face
Threw warm beams, like a sweet ghost of the Day,
Upon the roofs and pinnacles, and towers
Of the hush'd champaign. When she woke from sleep
Young Psyche woke the fairest of the three
Fair daughters of a king ; ah ! she was fair
Amid the cruel aspects of her foes
As witching melody, that breaks the dark,

And brings back memories of youth ; a rose
Amid the thorns ; a vine upon a rock ;
A silver river singing thro' the sands.
She woke from sleep, a sleep of such rare dreams,
As plumed Summer sheds upon the night,
When she steps softly forth, at set of sun,
From her noon rest in some cool lilybell
Dew-laden, and outspreads her musky wings.
Ah ! who can tell what dreams sweet Psyche had,
How colour'd and how fashion'd ? Sooner fix
The wavering iris on the spider's web,
That from the roof-tree swings its silver threads,
Twinkling and dim, and shifts against the light
Oft as the eye ; or gather up the dust
Scatter'd from the moth's wings ; or catch the breath
Of lemon-blooms, that come and go again
Like blissful thoughts. Perhaps the garden flowers
Had whisper'd her in sleep how they had fill'd
Their nectaries with sweets, till she hath stroll'd
Thro' bowery walks of the Hesperian isles,
Gathering gold bells that rose above her head,
And screen'd the midday sun with fair large leaves.
Or, while she slept, the impassion'd nightingale
Hath throbb'd a golden note into his ear
Out of his laurel shadows, and she dream'd
Of harp-strings, struck unto Elysian song.
Or some chance beam hath fallen on her face
Thro' the wove leaves, and she hath seemed to see
A lover lighten from the purple sky,

In beauty and in brightness like the gods,
And with the flashing of his amber vest
Turn the soft night to day.

IV

As she lay there
Such dreams had Psyche, and the unfelt wings
Of amorous Sylphids had but just forsook
Her drowsy lids. And now she lean'd her cheek
Against a lazy hand, and, from beneath
The odorous archway of a white-rose bough,
That stoop'd with all its clusters o'er the roof,
Across the darkling lattice open thrown
She saw the outspread region in the moon
Dimly, the starry night, the lucid air
Hush'd in such wondrous calm, as it had been
Fix'd by the finger of the God of love,
In lovely immortality, unfit
For the harsh tongues of the unkindly world,
Or dusty tread of toiling men, but laid
Forth like a mirror for twin lovers' souls.
She look'd into the night, that seemed to hark
The pulses of her heart ; but they, alas !
Were not the echoes of sweet phantasies,
Hopes, or remember'd joys ; her mournful eyes
Gazed without seeing thro' the misty light
Of woods, and sleeping gardens, and far streams,
To many an island cloudlet in the East,

That floated thro' the purple ether, steep'd
In moony splendours, piled with snowy domes,
And citadels of silver ; she had seen,
In her short sleep, a sorrow unconsoled
By any waking sense, for it was true.

V

Her youth—a blessing to the earth—was still
Unblest, and chill'd with tears ; and her affections,
Like a full fountain between narrow banks,
Gush'd forth, and eddy'd back upon themselves.
Seldom she sang, although her simple heart
Rose birdlike in the morn, and her rare tongue
Did not commend itself to their deaf ears
In tones of love, more sweet than theirs, but seem'd
To cry, “Shame on ye” ; and the tenderness,
That curved her red lips into gracious smiles,
When with clear notes she woke them up at morn,
Leaning her dewy eyelids over them,
Or left them with a low farewell at even,
And backward bended neck, and lamp in hand,
Show'd to their blind sense like the perfidy
Of her self-flattery. And if some one said,
“Bless her,” it lighten'd like a curse against them.
But most if her old father, turn'd to them,
Poising a fond tear in his upward eye,
As, in a whisper to himself, he said,
“She is most fair !” with peremptory faith

Look'd for swift confirmation of his words,
And cried, "Is she not fair?" Oh ! those proud sisters
Liefer had listen'd to the harshest word
Which that old man might utter—though it were
To hear their pleasant consciousness of beauty
Scatter'd with scorn, so that she shared it with them—
Than feed on adoration, hour by hour,
Lean by the side of her. But the grey king,
Relapsing to sweet thoughts of long ago,
Was answer'd with mere silence, which he took
For their approval, or with feign'd emotion
Sprung from some other cause, as some quick thought
Of recollected duty, some regret,
Some jocund mood too merry to be chain'd,
Some passing shadow, howsoever light ;
So that it served their rancours for a shield.
And they would start up wildly from their stools,
And rather weave a toilsome net of lies,
Than speak a hated truth. Then, if a sound
Stirr'd in the garden, "Hark !" they cried, "a voice
Calls from without"; what fortune ! up they sprang,
Unbarr'd the lattice, and would rather front
The burning noon, than answer, "She is fair."

VI

Howbeit the heart of Psyche, perfect-sweet,
And thriftless of its sweetness, as a rose
That to all winds is bounteous, but takes back

To its sweet heart the bliss it breathed around
So bounteously, sweet breath of other flowers—
Oh ! she who dealt free graces, tender mercies,
Pity, and ready smiles, and pleasant words,
Witless of her own treasures, was the first
To mark all virtues, and to store all good
Fondly, as if her soul, so richly fill'd,
Found all the more fair nooks, and quiet cells
To house boon memories in, and voices kind.
As two sharp thorns beset that lovely rose,
And, as it bends its bright head to and fro,
Following the enamour'd winds that flow to it,
Wound the smooth petals in the constant motion
With their hard fixed points ; her lavish spirit,
That round about spread circlets of delight,
And made wild natures bend to her, and tamed
With looks strange foes at strife with one another,
Felt the near presence of her proper kin,
Her own fair sisters, daughters of one mother,
As something evil. For they had forsworn
All sympathy of kind, since one spring morn,
In the clear twilight of their bridal bower,
They had beheld the king and queen together,
Over the cradle of the sleeping child
Leaning with looks of wonder and of love,
And heard the hateful words, “ Oh ! she is fair,
And still more fair than they.” Behind their backs
A Fury hover'd, gaunt as Death, beneath
The threshold of the outer door, and cast

Down the long gallery its shadow cold.
And since that hour that never should have been
Those dark-brow'd sisters, with thwart eyes of ill,
Beheld in her blue eyes of tenderness
The pride of Aphrodite, mocking them ;
And all her winsome innocence and mirth
Show'd in their vision as triumphant scorn.
The elder-born, that should have held her up,
Like two fair trees clasp'd with one lovely vine,
And loved each other linked sweetly thus
More fondly than before ; the wiser hearts
Like two bass chords of an harmonious lyre
That tremble to its treble, should have felt
Their memories echo to her artless hopes
Utter'd in pure simplicity to them.
Oh ! those tall maidens, as they stood apart,
Under an archway in a shadow soft,
And lovelier than all, save that sweet child,
Saw in each other's faces bloodless hate.
Their beauty wither'd into fell disdain,
Like two peach-blossoms smit with frost in March.
They look'd upon each other with shrunk lips,
And, from the twilight of that chamber, flow'd
Whispers, that in their ears did quickly change
To hisses, that aroused a hidden brood
Of serpents in their hearts ; and then they turn'd
To leave the chamber ; but they paused awhile,
And with reverted eyes again they said,
“ Oh ! she is fairer, fairer still than we ! ”

VII

How can I number all the illumined drops,
That glitter on the winds of morn, or count
The wavering glories on a pearly shell ?
Or all the woodnotes that the wildbirds sing ?
Or sum the voices of the lisping sea
On Summer evens ? Then, how should I record
All the enchantments from before thee flowing,
Rare Psyche, as thou walkedst on the earth,
Kindling the air with beauty, and with music ?
Sometimes thy laughter, and sometimes thy sorrow,
And sometimes those sweet rainbows, wove between
Thy smiles and tears, all were most beautiful,
And each more beautiful, succeeding each.
The painters strove together, mad with love
Of their own works, drawn from her many moods ;
And after fell to strife with one another,
Contending for the one look each had seen ;
And sculptors kiss'd the marble they had wrought.
Musicians dreamt of her sweet-sounding tongue,
And multiplied its magic in their tongue,
As 'twere a spark become a wreathing flame.
The poets did their best, but scorn'd it all
When done ; but, had they not, they must have died
Expressionless. When she went forth, the day
Gave welcome to her, and, where'er she pass'd,
They follow'd her in blessing old and young.
World-weary spirits felt a thrill of youth,

And iron hearts wax'd pitiful, and changed
At her approach, and men, who had shed blood
Remorselessly, repented from that hour.
The boys and girls flung her fresh wreaths of flowers,
Or bended sly to look into her face ;
And hungry misery on his crutches rose
To wonder at that sight ; and from on high
The marble palaces were throng'd with eyes
To gaze down on her, and the temple gates
Grew narrow with the press as she came in.
The priests went home to dream of her, ev'n they
In hours of adoration saw but her,
And from the clouding incense shaped her face.
And first a whisper ran along the crowd,
Like wind among the leaves ; and then a murmur,
As of a gathering exultation, rose,
And then a mighty cry, " She is not mortal,
Kypris is not so fair, another Kypris !
Hail thou, our island princess ! hail ! all hail ! "
And eager mothers held their babes on high,
To catch the light that from her aspect shone ;
The lame man touch'd her robe, and the blind eyes
Wept for the love of that they could not see !

VIII

The city maidens, emulous of praise,
Beheld her and despair'd. And first they shaped
Their motions and their utterance after hers ;

As if the colour of a vest, the grace
Of measured steps, the fashion of the hair,
A sweet voice, or the radiance of a smile,
Or all the cunning mimicries of art
Could change them to that Nature had made her,
True to herself, and gracious unto all,
A perfect harmony whose inward parts
Fill'd up the visible presence with the soul ;
A lamp of beauty lighted from within.
And, when they saw that fashion is not form,
They fell to railing ; and some blamed her eyes,
They were too blue ; and straight the blue-eyed spoke
In her defence ; and some disdain'd her speech,
It was too seldom ; then the silent moved
Their tongues for modesty ; and so it came
That all, who thought themselves rebuked in her,
Stood up her vouchers. So she grew in fame,
Till the great tide of her continued triumph
Drew into it all passions, all opinions,
And those, that were her rivals, grew at last
To be her flatterers ; and their envious scorn,
Turn'd from its mark, fell on the heads of those
That rose against her. But, oh ! Psyche dreamt not
Of glory, or of praise, or sought the eyes
That gazed upon her, and her virgin heart
Wept, for she loved not worship, but affection.
Her barren honours quench'd that love, no more
Than thirsty wanderers in a wilderness
Can drink the mist, that tempts them from afar.

And yet the mountain-nymphs were not so blithe
As she when soaring on freehearted song ;
And she would dance before her father's chair
Till the flowers dropt upon her heated brow,
And fell upon the floor ; and her quick breath
Drown'd her gay laughter and her jocund words.
Or, when she fill'd the golden antique cup,
That kings had drain'd on coronation days,
In festal banquet-rooms, or after battle
Under the tent had lifted to their lips,
While the foe fled amid the dust afar,
And they put off their helms, as, bending low,
With one knee on the footstool of her sire,
She raised to him the blood-red wine, and he
Murmuring would put her back, her rare smile won
The king to do that honour to himself.
And who so happy if a merry word
Fell from his lips ? or, if a tender look
Glanced on her, who so fond and proud as she ?

IX

Ah ! sure the Gods, who wake and watch for all,
With patience shield afflicted innocence,
And fill with love the heart that throbs with pain.
Else Psyche's had been broke—for, had she striven,
And scorn'd, and answer'd evil words with ill,
Her tender nature, scorch'd with fiery heats,
Had wither'd as a blossom without rain,

And shed its delicate hues ; or, had she wept
But half the tears that throng'd within her heart,
Like that same blossom with the rain-drops wet,
Been frozen unto death by frosts of scorn.
What solace is there for a callow dove,
Torn by the vultures, but to flee, and hide
Within the secret silence of deep boughs,
And nestle under loving wings, and mourn
Its low-toned anguish to one faithful ear ?
High in a bower, that look'd across the land
Beyond the palace gardens, over realms
Of breezy forest, dales of fluttering vine,
O'er templed steeps, and sheeny villages,
Far as the silver margin of the sea,
One sat apart who seem'd not of this world,
An aged woman of an hundred years ;
One who had been a nurse unto the queen
Stricken in years herself. A marvel she
Of snowy age ; and yet so bright her eye
Beneath her pale and venerable brows,
All written o'er with unremember'd moments,
And still remember'd hours, that it might seem,
As tho' the gather'd thoughts of all her life
Burn'd like a beacon there. She sat and whirl'd
Her crazy distaff with a crazy hand,
And span and span, and look'd toward the fields
She could not see. Ofttimes she mutter'd, oft
She shook her head and sigh'd, for then she felt
The sunbeams creeping o'er her face, and knew

It made the hidden world more beautiful.
She felt the soft wind kiss her, and she heard
The wild bees moaning round her cherish'd flowers,
And urns of spikenard ; and two lazy doves
Coo'd to each other in an open arch.
So she lived on and span, and sigh'd for Fate
To snap their thread, and seem'd as weird as they.
But all the records of that kingly house
Were homed in that old brain ; she knew how oft
The funeral trumpet, and the bridal torch
Had pass'd beneath the gates ; the sad old tales,
And ghostly echoes of the days of old.
And now the oracles were not so wise
As her great age. Therefore, in grief or joy,
In hushes 'mid the tumults of the world,
They came to her, and all perplexed thoughts,
Doubts, angers, hopes, imaginations, fears,
They whisper'd in her old familiar ear.
They fear'd no more her frowning brows, her voice,
Her crutch once awful to their innocence,
A rod of chastisement, an arm of succour,
A wand to beckon from the earth or air
All that they loved or fear'd. And now the spells,
That ruled them children, broken in their hearts,
By growing years had soften'd into love ;
Love still could seek the chamber in the tower,
And listen to the voice it once had fear'd,
Though it was weak and faint ; and its sage words,
And snatches of old songs, and mumbled sounds,

That from the ruin'd chambers of her brain
Shook like the dust of ages. Psyche came
One morn, and laid against the aged heart
Her tear-dropt cheek, and murmured, "O old friend,
Were they not what they are, my sisters, tall
And beautiful, the daughters of one mother
Joining her soft eyes to my father's brows,
At their unkindness tho' mine eyes might weep,
I still might seek for comfort, in the hope
To win with years, and patience, and goodwill,
Their hard averted hearts ; with timely acts
To make their pulses tremble unto mine,
And warm their strange blood into tenderness.
But, if the love of nature be not there,
Can friendship build a nest in kindred hearts,
Or slowly piece together little things
As birds and bees that know not what they do,
In spite of cruel instincts that oppose,
Till a fair fabric rise before their reason,
And take it captive spite of evil will ?
Will they, who chide my laughter, scorn my songs,
Love me the more when doleful age hath made
My unloved face unlovelier ? Will they mock
My unskill'd tongue the less, when daily grief
Hath made it tuneless, or I cease to sing ?
If I am vain, slight-hearted ; if their beauty
Heaven hath not dealt me—for they tell me so,
They tell me hourly—and if all my words
Be idle, ignorant, unprofitable,

Oh ! would not Nature's love—as thine, dear friend,
Which never fail'd us—rather veil my faults,
And gild my poverty, and hide it from me,
Than show it to me, as though one should chide
A hungry beggar for his nakedness ?

Oh ! kindly Nature kindles with her sun
Bare rocks, and barren sands, and icy peaks,
And with divine enchantment turns the nought
Of darkness into all the wealth of day !
Who knows but with soft accents they might change
Mine evil into good, with timely smiles
They might subdue the froward heart they blame ?
Yet, as I muse, I guess not what they mean ;
For never anger lived within me, nor
Vainglory, such as they have charged to me,
But only that pale flower of love, that breathes
The best it can, when trodden under foot,
And lifts its dying head that never dies.
I never pull'd a rose for Helen's hair,
But she would fling it down upon the ground ;
I never twined my arms round Rhoda's neck,
But she would thrust me back with frowns, or blows ;
I who can never pluck a butterfly
Out of a lilybell, for fear to fray
Its filmy wings : they know not what they do."
Then would she sigh, and weep, and wreath her arms
About the aged one, and cry, " O mother,
Learn me art's magic, learn me charms to win
Them whom I love ; 'tis long to sow, and bide

Thro' loveless years, and then perchance to reap
Only despair ! Ah ! rather let me die,
And lay my youth beside the aged bones
Of those, who pass before me out of time,
Than live, when they are gone, with none to love me !
So I have sought thee rather than my own
Fond mother ; for, if thou canst hear my voice,
Thou canst not look upon my troubled face,
Else would my words be frozen in their flow,
And half the secrets of my soul be hid."

So did poor Psyche, artless of all ill
To others, chide herself, and mourn in vain,
Sue heaven for graces which she could not lack,
And pray for love, or death. Her golden hair
Stream'd o'er her ivory shoulders as she knelt
Grief-stricken ; her fair arms, beneath her cross'd,
Pillow'd her aching brows ; the blind one felt
The throbbing of that innocent heart awake
Once more the dying pulses of her own
With sorrow and with scorn ; for she had loved
Psyche more than her sisters ; she, the youngest,
The fairest and the best—now she was blind—
Sweet as the last beam of the lovely light,
Ere her old eyes were seal'd unto the world,
Lay in her memory. Slowly she arose,
And, fondly feeling for the radiant head
Of that dear child, she said, " Ah ! welladay,
Ah ! weary hour, that I should live to hear
The Furies mutter in this honour'd house.

Sooner than this I should have lost mine ears
Together with mine eyes. In this strange world
Ill things keep pace with good ; blossoms have blights ;
Foul cankers eat away the core o' the rose ;
The serpent creeps into the cuckoo's nest ;
And worms lie gnawing in the heart o' the nut ;
And all things have their shadows ; and, my child,
Wisdom on crutches walks. What wonder then
If thy young beauty, promising so richly,
Is peck'd at ere 'tis ripe ; thy blue-eyed youth
Is torn and chatter'd at by wicked pies
That yearn to snatch thy plumes ? But have good cheer.
Dear child, ere these old eyes were dark as night,
One morn, as thou wert in thy nurse's arms,
And thy two sisters sported at her side,
Gathering wild berries, stringing flowers, or ran
Under the dewy coverts to peep in
Where blackbirds chanted loudly ; I myself,
Wandering not far apart, came up to thee,
To look upon thee, and I saw thy face
Lit by a sunbeam suddenly, as 'twere
A little golden picture, set around
With green leaves of the forest ; and I mark'd
Upon thy infant forehead, lilywhite,
A blue vein, like a tiny river, run.
And then I said unto myself, alas !
Again I see the warning I once saw
On my own babe's fair brow. For long ago
The old folk told me this, that they had heard

From other ancients, and so long ago,
So long, they hardly knew if it were speech,
Or something whisper'd to them in a dream ;
That blue vein, that divides the forehead clear
Into two portions with its azure line
So clearly graven, signifies the death
Too soon, as of white violets ere their time,
Sunn'd into life by a too flattering Spring,
Of the young child who shows the mystic sign ;
Or a long life of all prosperity,
Riches, and honours, and delights. She died,
Ev'n as I fear'd ; but thou, I ween, wilt live
Daughter of Princes, when ill tongues have ceased ;
Wilt live to prove the double of that sign,
The sunshine, not the shadow ; and my words
Will come to thee hereafter, when thy words
No more can come to me. For this I pray
The Immortal Gods ; and, if 'twere possible,
Thou couldst die early, that thy death may be
A victory crown'd with everlasting life ;
And so the twofold oracle on thy front
Doubly fulfilled in thee for ever bless thee ! ”

X

Then Psyche lifted up her head and spoke.
“ O mother, mother, what I tell thee now
Will seem impossible to mortal ears,
And yet 'tis true : who would believe the sun

Who had not seen it, though all tongues should join
To witness to it? or divine the sea,
Because a thousand eyes had look'd on it?
Great things are less than little, if the tale
Of their great glory draws not sympathy
From listening ears. So many things have been
Since Time was, and will be till Time is not,
Which are too mighty for the vulgar sense,
And so in their supremacy o'ertop
All vision, even as the tiniest things,
Smaller than grains of dust, or motes of mist,
Lie under it. How shall I tell thee all,
And yet seem to thee not the maddest thing
That ever went unbound? For, O dear friend,
I love, and yet my lover is not man,
And, though I keep his image in my heart,
The substance is not seen upon this earth,
Or to my waking eyesight. If I turn
Coldly away from flattering arts, and see
But faintest moonshine in the courtly smiles
Of those, who seek me for my state alone,
After that midnight sun who shines on me
As in some lands the sun of Nature lights
The world when men are sleeping; if I seek
In vain some semblance of the God I dream—
Tho' 'tis not dreaming, for I see and hear
The changes of his aspect and his voice,
And not a word falls from him but my heart
Drinks in, my soul approves—'tis that by day

All beauty of humanity is nought,
Beside that treasured memory ; and the least
Faint glimmer of it in the face of man
But serves to mock me, minding me of all
Still lacking to the glory of the whole ;
As the sad moonbeam trembling on the sea,
Of the full blaze of noon. But, if I hear,
And see, and know, and feel, alas ! alas !
When day comes back, and I return to day,
As to a sickly world of phantoms, whence
The greater light is banish'd, oh ! I weep,
I weep to think the fair brief night is past.
And then, a miracle ! for not in vain
I strive—as once I strove to gather up
With tears the loose pearls of a broken chain
Strewn on the marble floor, lest I should lose
One only of the precious gems I took
That morning from my mother,—not in vain.
For with the yearning, fixed will I can
Rethread upon my heartstrings the sweet words
Of wisdom utter'd to my soul in sleep.
And then the lovely spirit of the whole
Reigns o'er me ; while that dreadful thought, I love,
Vibrates within me, lighting to despair
My lone young life ; for oh ! I know not who
Nor whence he is, nor whither he may draw
My virgin widowhood more sorrowful
Than any penury, wherein memory shares
Of past abundance ; for both worlds are shut,

Both earth and heaven ; the one I cannot share,
The other may not reach ; yet I must love.
Then let me die that I may meet my love ;
Or know for sure that all was but a dream.
The wounded bird, that struggles in mid-air,
Is but a feeble image of this doom !
Oh ! all goes back behind the folding gates
Of sleep, except the image of that bliss
Unparallel'd ; and when I stretch my arms
To clasp the peerless vision, I awake,
Folding within these arms my own fond mother,
Her aspect sorrowful, her earnest eyes
Dewy with tears ; for she is ever by
To watch my waking, wonder in her looks
To see the sudden sorrow in my face
After the light that shone there just before.
It was the eve of the great festival,
And, weary of delights, I laid my head
Amid the flowers fresh-gather'd ; and the moon
Rain'd o'er my little fountain by the wall
Its own soft radiance, till its waters ran
A stream of stars, the while its tinkling flow
Lull'd me to summer slumber. Still I saw,
Or seem'd to see, the chamber dark, and bright
With midnight gleams and gloomings ; but its hush
Seem'd to speak to me lovingly, its light
Wax'd golden-soft rather than silver ; all
The space grew vaster, and its twilights fill'd
With odours sweeter than my wildflower bells.

And all without, drown'd in the ocean pale
Of breathless glory, was a paradise,
Such as my waking eyes had never seen.
Such forests surged amid the mountain folds,
Such regal summits glitter'd, and such streams,
Mighty and calm, wound in and out the woods,
And not a motion stirr'd. But, as I gazed,
In wonder, something on the topmost peak
Shone like a fire ; it rested not, but leapt
The perilous height, like to a falling star,
Waved o'er the waving woodlands, and along
The viny champaign flew right onward. Then
It rose again into the sheeny air,
Upon the slanting broad beams of the moon
Glanced downward silently, then paused awhile ;
And that star-brightness took a living form,
And face, more lovable than aught on earth.
And I could tell, as I look'd on him, all
That all the phantasies of all this world
Might leave untold for ever. I could tell
That what I look'd on was the outward sign
Of all I held within me ; in that face,
That mutely smiled upon me, there were traced
What seem'd my own far memories, fold in fold,
And hopes too subtle to be snatch'd, except
For one wild moment, passionate instincts, flames
Of exultation, tenderness of ruth,
Mingled with momentary flashing fears,
And pains. Ev'n all, that on this earth of ours

Had stirr'd my heart, moved on that countenance,
As on a wondrous harp of many strings
Manifold music ; and I knew it all ;
And knew that I and that diviner one
Could never more be parted, tho' we met
No more for ever ; that my days of life
Were ended if he came not. For no use
Remain'd for me but to forget no more
For ever for a moment the fair face,
That had look'd on me, and made fully known
That he was mine and I was his ; or death
Of body and of soul were better far,
Than to lament and live for evermore.
And then I heard him utter holy words
In such a voice, as when a melody,
Wrought wonderfully, takes the raptured ear
With an omnipotence, that breaks the gates
Of sense, and reaches inward to the soul,
And reigns therein by day and night, and makes
All other sounds as vanity. As he spoke
I heard my dearest hopes and phantasies
Utter'd like music. ‘Yes,’ he said, ‘my soul
Knows thee, beloved soul, my thought thy thought,
And my love thine ; and, tho’ not yet on earth
Thou couldst be one with him who is in heaven,
Nor he in heaven with her who is on earth,
Yet, as the moon is nought without the sun,
Thou hast from me drunk in my spirit, I
Have drawn from thee the knowledge, that thou art

The one predestined for me, out of all
Incalculable creatures, gods or men,
And loves innumerable. Now is the time
That I may woo thee, O my promised bride,
That I may tell thee, all I am to thee,
All thou shalt be to me. The time is come,
As when the curtain of the dark is raised
Before the day, and thro' the golden deeps
Of the unfathomable orient
Thy sight flies inward, inward ; till the sun
Leaps up, and light and heat are wed together.
Listen, beloved, for the earth is deaf
To holy things, as when the sun is set,
And the last purple of the west is cold.
All hearts are darken'd, but thine own, thy one,
Which I have cared to feed with thoughts, beyond
Thy years and time, by secret influences
As those that, whether waking or asleep,
Sustain the hidden framework, night and day,
Of thy frail body which is born to die ;
So have I fed thy soul unknown to thee.
And, if I show'd Thee in my changeful face
My heart's unfailing sympathy with thine,
Because, thine unseen guardian, I drank in
Its many moods, and loved them, henceforth thou
Shalt give me back, when thou hast known me well,
An answering throb for every pulse of mine.'

XI

"He paused awhile, and then his voice became
More solemn in its tone, tho' not less tender.
He said, 'Beloved, I will tell thee now
Of things, yet unreveal'd to mortal man,
Divinest mysteries, that shall be known
Hereafter, when the soul of Man shall be
Best fitted to receive'; and thus he spake :
'From uncreated substance all things flow ;
And all the causes are but effluences
From one eternal Essence ; from His life
Do all things hold their own, and, as He lives,
They live ; for they but shadow in finite
His Infinite ; and He hath set the seal
Of his own image upon all his works.
But Man is likest God : he is the king
Of Nature, in his person summing all
Her attributes. As She, throughout her vast
Extension, symbols his humanity,
Love, sex, and marriage, so Man images
The Male and Female of the highest one,
Which are the Wisdom and the Love Divine ;
And Love, flown down from heaven upon the earth,
Is Female, and discreted wisdom Male.
Look on the sun, which, in thy world of Space
And Time, is Nature's mirror of her God,
Of her Creator ; how the heat and light
Are to the earth His wisdom and His Love,

The one illumining, interpenetrating,
The other unfolding and expanding all.
Consider how that every spark, that flies
Forth from that central glory, ev'n the least,
Are separate suns, and from them radiate
Both light and heat, as, from the Love and Truth
Of God each separate fresh-created form,
Which He throws out into the Universe
From Self-existent Being, and informs
With His own Life, reflects in its degree
The Male and Female of the highest one,
Which are the Wisdom and the Love Divine.
All things are male and female, twofold all,
Ev'n from the highest lives in highest heaven
Down to the atom elements on earth,
And Love itself the everlasting chain
That winds through all things; and the outward world,
In all its forms, is but the endless pomp
Of bridal triumphs, which are visible signs
Of the invisible. Whether typified
By manifold breathing life of man, and beast,
And bird, and creeping things; or lower forms
Of green tree, herb, and flower; or by the cold
Insentient stone, and metal; 'tis the same,
Infinite complex of the Good and True,
Picturing in all created worlds
The Infinite Dual of the Highest One,
That sheds itself—as the all-searching sun
In light and heat through all material things—

Through every form of being, making two
Of every creature, thro' the one Great Whole ;
Reflect, and supplement each other's life,
As bride and bridegroom ; and all Life flows on
From contact of twin opposites, that make
One harmony ; no other spring of Life
But Love and Marriage, or in earth or heaven.
And as each leaf, and flower, and grain of dust,
And every atom, moulded into shape,
Are Male and Female, so the soul of Man,
Foremost image of the One Supreme ;
For Will is Female, Understanding Male.
And as the husband and the wife uphold
Each other, mutually give and take,
So Love and Truth exchange their fire and light,
And blend together till the two are one.
And as the Highest in His Infinite
Is twofold, so each separate human soul
Of Man or Woman, in its proper self
Is Male and Female both, the Woman more
Vessel of Love, of Understanding less,
Man less of Love, of Understanding more.'
And, whensoe'er he paused, I answered him
With radiant light of love ineffable !
' Within the sanctuary of his being Man
Worshipp'd the love and wisdom of his God,
Reflected in his own, and loved himself
Beyond all creatures ; for he saw therein
All that was rarest and most excellent.

For all that was in separate vessels held,
Whether in mineral, in fair flower, green tree,
In fish, or bird, or beast, he held them all,
Under imperial rule of his own form,
Within the kingdom of his single life.

But still he was alone, and what he loved—
The marvels, and the might of his own soul—
Loved not again ; the wonders, that he saw
Within him, made no answer to his prayer.
The beauty, which his silent thoughts adored,
Was to his sense unseen, while every form
Around him look'd up with rapt eyes to his.

The blossoms breathed to him, the low wind sigh'd,
And woodbirds gave him back in flowing songs
The sweetness of affections, springing up
Within him silently ; the world without
Brought him delights and homage, gave him all,
Save that he dreamt of, yearn'd for, the sole form,
That might look up, in likeness of himself,
To the Supreme, as all this radiant world
Look'd up to him ; something his spirit shaped,
Whose loveliness might charm him like the rose
Held in his hand ; enchant him, as the sun
At morn above the mountains ; soothe his soul,
Like the soft stars at midnight, and respond,
As the lone echoes to his own clear voice,
But with a living tongue, and speak to him
Freely, and of itself ; and charm him on—
As he could draw the wild things with a song—

With rapturous heaven-born utterance, like his own,
And make the world within his heart a sphere
Lit by a lovelier sun than Nature's own,
With love for him alone !' I answer'd him
With radiant light of love ineffable !
Howbeit, ever as his golden words
Ceased, and his presence vanish'd, and I wept,
Sighing, 'Oh ! how shall I remember all
That he hath said, or half ?' my memory fill'd,
Like my dark chamber, with the rising sun.
And every syllable that he had spoken
Came back as it doth now ; for, oh ! it seems,
When I am waken'd to the outer world,
His spirit whispers to an inner sense
All that he utter'd first unto my soul ;
Or how should my frail nature sound the deeps
Of heaven-born revelations such as these,
More than this body soar amid the stars ?
But thus I make them a familiar mood,
And learn by musing ; as a dazzled eye
By little and by little fronts the light."

XII

So, every night of the full moon, he came
Into her chamber, and she heard his voice.
But ever, with the waning moon, they saw
Her strength go from her, and her beauty grew
Transparent, as a lily in the light

Of dying day ; and her still breathing form
It seem'd too rude a breath might bear away.
Till, one bright morn, she came not forth, and all
Went up in fear, for they had ceas'd to hope.
They cross'd the threshold with swift steps, but hush'd,
And not a voice was heard ; and they look'd down
Upon her face, whereon a sunbeam lay
That glorified it ; for a while they stood,
And thought she slept, for still the rose of life
Bloom'd on her cheek, and still a happy smile
Moulded her lip, as tho' she saw in dream
Again the wonders she had seen before.
But they who watch'd her wearied, for the rose
Died from her cheek, the smile from off her lip.
Yet the pure graces of the virgin form
Changed not, nor lifeless marble was more cold
Than that unbreathing beauty, which to take
For sculptured fancy were an easy thing.
And, if but hungry death had held his hand,
Nor marr'd that rare and visible harmony,
There was a marvel to all ages left,
Better than carved work, or poet's dream.
Then in the silent chamber there uprose
The sound of weeping ; but she was not there.
They knew they look'd on something that had been,
And, having lost the inmost all of all,
Was not, and should never be again.
They knew they look'd on all that was of all
That had been, something less than the cold stone,

The image that hath neither heart nor brain,
And yet, if it had sight, might mock at men,
And see their countless generations die,
Triumphant in its beauty over all.

They call'd to her ; she was not there, she heard
No mourning voice, she saw no hopeless tears ;
She seem'd to waken in a sea of light,
Wherein there moved beloved shapes she knew,
Who raised her up, and bad her welcome home.
As swoons a babe into the world of sleep,
And wakens there to unimagined things
Breathed by the loving spirits in its soul,
With every moment clearer grew her sense
Of all things round her. Then she heard a voice,
“ Make ready, and put on thy bridal robes,
Thy heavenly garments sent thee from the King.”
She heard the virgins singing, and the sound,
As of a jubilee, from open doors,
That rose and fell upon the sunny morn ;
And all that song so moved the listeners' ears,
And hers too, that there lapsed into her soul
Blissful serenest calm and joy divine !

XIII¹

And then behold an Angel enter'd in,
And stood before her. “ Come with me,” he said.

¹ The following two pages are paraphrased from one of the “Memorable Relations” of Swedenborg in the *Conjugial Love*.

Straightway she follow'd him, until they reach'd
The nuptial palace, and the doors were open'd ;
Another Angel welcomed them. "I am,"
He said, "thy bridegroom's messenger," and led
The way into a vestibule, and show'd
The seats prepared for them ; and there was set
A table in the middle of the hall,
Whereon there stood a seven-branch'd candlestick
With golden sconces, and along the walls
Hung silver lamps ; and, when the lamps were lit,
The atmosphere of the whole chamber breathed
A golden softness ; other tables stood
Hard by, whereon were order'd loaves of bread
In triple row ; and every corner had
Its little stand with crystal goblets set
For wine. And, as they look'd on all these things,
A door was open'd near the marriage chamber ;
Six virgins issued, then the bridegroom's self ;
And lo ! he was the lover of her dreams !
And, as she stood in sweet astonishment,
He took her by the hand ; the blessed pair
Took seats before the golden candlesticks,
The bride on the right hand, and by her side
The virgins ranged ; the bridegroom on the left
Carried what seem'd a mitre on his head,
And wore a purple vesture, and beneath
A tunic of bright linen, belted round
With lustrous girdle boss'd with golden plate,
Circled with gems, and, graven on the plate,

An eagle, ensign of that marriage sphere
Above, the heavenly host whereto henceforth
They should belong ; the bride in scarlet shone
Above a garment of fine needlework
Of rarest tissue ; and beneath her breast
A golden girdle, and upon her head
A crown of gold with rubies. As they sat,
The bridegroom turn'd and look'd upon the bride,
And on her finger put a ring of gold,
And claspt both wrists, and hung her neck with pearls,
Saying, "Accept these pledges," which she took ;
And then he kiss'd her, murmuring, "Thou art mine!"
Then all the marriage guests assembled there,
First each one uttering with his single voice,
And then in choral acclamation all,
"Blessing divine attend upon ye both!"
When they were silent, yet another form
Majestical took up the blissful words,
For he appear'd amid that company
In place of the Great King himself ; and lo !
A rolling smoke of odours breathed from high
In token of supreme approval, fill'd
The chamber ; then the immortals ministrant
Took from the table by the candlestick
The loaves of bread, and from the corner ones
Cups fill'd with wine, and gave to every guest.
They ate and drank ; the bridegroom and the bride
Then rose together, and the virgins six
Holding the lamps of silver walk'd with them

Up to the threshold of the nuptial chamber,
And then the married pair went in together.
Then a wise man, one of the marriage guests,
Said to the strangers, "Have ye understood?"
(For there were souls of strangers from the earth
Permitted for a time to look on things
Supernal, while the body lay in trance)
They answer'd, "But a little; tell us why
The bridegroom was so strangely habited."
The wise man answer'd, "Know ye, 'tis because
The bridegroom symbols the Great King himself,
Who is our One Highpriest, and Lord, and King;
The bride his faithful ones; and this is why
He wore a robe and tunic, and his brow
Was mitred as a priest's; and this is why
She had a crown of gold upon her head,
And wore a scarlet mantle as a queen.
To-morrow morn they will be clad anew,
For these first garments are but for a day."
The strangers said, "Why did the bridegroom lack
His bridesmen answering to the bridal maids?"
The wise man answer'd, "Know ye, 'tis because
The male as well as female bear the name
Virgin, which signifies the faithful ones,
And they are male and female; and they twain
Follow the Great King wheresoe'er he goes."

XIV

Again, behold, it was the morrow morn
After the marriage, and they stood together,
Gazing up into heaven, and they could see
Three firmaments above them, each from each
Apart ; then they could see the first unfold,
And then the second over it ; and last
The third and highest. After they beheld,
Beyond the first and lowest firmament,
The immortal habitants of the first Heaven ;
Beyond the second, those of the second Heaven ;
Beyond the third and highest, the third Heaven.
And, as she marvell'd much at what she saw,
A voice, as of a trumpet, call'd to her ;
“ We see that in your thoughts is wedded love.
But know that in your world it is not known
Hitherto ; but henceforth it must be known.
Therefore it seemeth good to the Great King
To open heaven unto ye, and to fill
Your inmost spirits with diviner light.
Our blisses in the highest heaven flow
From purest wedded love ; so we are charged
To send down to ye, a true-wedded pair,
Pure, harmonious, perfect.” As he spoke
We saw a chariot from the highest heaven
Descending, and therein was seated One,
It seem'd, not two ; but, as it near'd, they saw
The one part into twain ; the chariot shone

With diamantine splendours, to it yoked
Young horses snowy-white ; the loving ones
Held in their hands two turtles, and they spoke.
“Shall we come nearer to ye ? But beware
The fiery radiation that we draw :
Search not too far within ye, for the thoughts,
That would light up your innermost, are all
Ineffable, and incommunicable
To mortal man on earth. Take warning then,
And of the thoughts breathed into ye by us
Ponder those only which ye can bear down
To mortal men, no higher.” And they said
“Come near, we will take heed to what ye say.”
So they came nearer, and behold they were
Husband and wife. “We are a wedded pair,”
Said they ; “and we have lived in heaven together
All happy, since the age of gold, and young
As now ye see us.” Psyche and her spouse
Look’d on them, and beheld, in their attire
And aspects, wedded love was symbolised ;
For the celestial habitants are all
Affections of pure love in human form ;
The ruling love is pictured in the face,
And from its kind the raiment and its hues
Are fashion’d ; so in heaven it is said
That every one is clothed in his own love.
Then gazing on the beauty of the bride
They saw, and did not see it ; for they saw
Beauty all-perfect, yet they did not see,

For the all-perfect is ineffable.

She said, "What see ye?" and they answer'd her
"We see but love conjugal, and its form ;
And yet we do not see it"; for there shone
Out of her face lightnings, that dimm'd the sight,
And filled them with great wonder ; whereupon
She leant a little from them, and their eyes
Could look on her undazzled, and they saw
Her hair was braided with a charming art,
Worthy of peerless beauty, and diadem'd
With flowers ; she wore a chain of carbuncles
About her neck, whence hung a rosary
Of chrysolites ; armlets of pearl she bore,
And robe of scarlet clasp'd with ruby gems ;
And lo ! a wonder, for their colours changed
Oft as the changes of her countenance
Turn'd to or from her husband, sometimes more
And sometimes less ; and when she look'd on him
They flamed forth brightly, when she turn'd aside,
They paled, and wan'd. And when the husband spake,
It seem'd the wife spoke too, and when she spoke
He spoke ; such unison arose in minds
Of perfect harmony ; each voice itself
Was musical with mutual love, and sprang
From inmost joy of innocence and peace.
Then spoke the spouse of Psyche : "Now 'tis time
To tell thee of myself, not what I am—
For that, O love, thou knowest—but what I was.
For the immortal is but mortal man,

Higher, and happier, and mortality
The one sole basis of the immortal life.
On earth I was of those who loved to cast
In moulds of beauty Truth and Good ; I sought
One for my mate who should delight to know
My attributes, and look on them, and love
Me for their sake, and them for mine again ;
And I should love her for that beauty and grace,
Sweetest reflex of mine own soul in her,
Whence, as thro' some translucent crystal lamp,
Her heart's pure good should radiate ; but I found
None who might answer to my lonely sighs.
And so I fled the earth, where she was not,
Ere youth was over ; for the heart, that thirsts
For spiritual food, will pine and die,
Ev'n as the starved body, and so bring
Death to the last as surely from within,
As when an arm'd hand strikes it from without.
So, in my desolate state, I welcomed that
Which men call death, as others would a bride.
Alas ! for me who triumph'd over time,
Time wrought his vengeance on me, and I saw,
As only spiritual eyes can see,
One day thy spirit prison'd like my own ;
Thy goodness answering to my very thought ;
Thy beauty kindled by thy loving soul ;
One, like myself, the idol of thy dreams ;
And more than all thy tender widow'd heart,
That sought in vain for less than I had sought,

A gentle voice of one of thine own kin,
A sympathetic smile, a pitying tear,
And found no answer to thy love but hate !
If thou hadst wedded any chief or king,
And he had gloried in thy flower of youth,
As thou in his renown, still hadst thou been,
Since thou wert born, betrothed unto me,
My promised only bride since thou hadst life.
And I beheld thee from my sphere above
Beyond the earth ; for in thee are contain'd
All attributes that answer unto mine,
As mine to thine, as harp and voice, attuned
To one another, make no harmony
Until they join ; and if a thousand men
Should woo thee, each one holding something less
Than the full measure of the complement
I am to thee, he could not be thy spouse.
And all the beauty I have seen on earth,
With all the beauty of the maids of heaven,
Are less than thy fulfilment ; for thou art
My fulness, my own thought, my second self ;
And, though a thousand ages roll'd between
My being and thine, we must together meet,
As sure as sun and moon, as earth and sea,
As voices utter'd from remotest stars
That seek each other thro' the deeps of space.
And now the time is come for thee, O love,
To know me, as thou art known by me ; to draw
Thy heart to mine, as mine is drawn to thee ;

To feed my growing wisdom with thy love,
To feed thee with that wisdom, doubly strong
When sunn'd by love of thine ; so that we two
May win from one another evermore
Beauty and strength, for evermore to wax
In strength and beauty." And she answer'd him
With radiant light of love, ineffable !
More full of truth than any tongue could be ;
Ev'n as a silent sunburst glorifies
Both heaven and earth, when not a sound is heard.

XV

And, while he spake these words, they held their way
Forth from the city, and beheld a realm
Spread out before them, such as mortal man
Had never look'd on wholly. "This," he said,
"Is the fair kingdom of such loving souls,
As, in the twilights of that world below,
Which we have left, still fashion'd something rare
From waking dreams, fantastically wrought
In lineaments and hues, so beautiful
That all the smoke and dust of evil things
Was hidden from them thro' those pleasant hours
That held them thus spellbound ; as tho' the light
Of rainbows hung between them and the world
Bathing it in all colours. Here are they
Who overcame the sorrows and the sins
Of proud self-love by love of that they saw

Soaring far off above the walls of Time,
The cares and the perplexities of those
Who bend their faces downward to the earth
And lose all vision of the stars of heaven,
In search of gold ; and raise them, but to mock
The heart, that sighs for good that is to be,
The godlike soul, that thinks not of himself,
With his loud honours, and his piled wealth,
His thriftless hand, and thousand pastimes bought
Of needy misery with such scanty dole
As ransom'd him from Death, no more. Here they,
Who caught the light they saw upon their brows
At intervals, and echoed the sweet sounds
They heard, in moments snatch'd from the uproar
Of daily fears and tumults; who portray'd
The forms and aspects of the very Gods
And show'd them unto men ; who sow'd with seed
Of better life, and love, the barren earth,
And went forth lavishing with either hand
Blisses and boons, like golden anthers blown
On winds of morning ; yet whose pulses keen
Thrill'd to the simple notes of homely joy ;
Shook to the sound of weeping, more than theirs
Who look'd on daily sorrows ; and could sound
The depths of anguish in a single heart
More than a conqueror one of all the woes
That he had left behind him. Here they dwell,
Who had no need on earth of any wealth,
Save that in the hush'd treasure-house, unlock'd

By loving spirits only, who beheld,
Outspread before them as realities,
Rapturous ideals. While the painter lays
Upon his tablets something of the fair,
And fleeting fancies that his soul hath seen,
In forms and colours for the outward sense
To look on, which but mock the inward eye,
That gazed half-blinded on the passing pomp—
As one who turns back dazzled from the sun
To paint his image—here each spirit brings
His loveliest imaginings, his best
Of beauty ; and the unimagined All,
Sharing in that bestow'd on it by each,
Stands forth in living actuality,
More clearly shown than any realm on earth
Beneath a zenith sun ; till all rejoice,
To see their own with kindred glories mix'd
In peerless harmony. The world without
Rises, illumined from the life within,
Before their eyes for ever, varying still,
As on the earth the changes of the Spring
And Summer, or of one long summerday
In their finite diversity unfold ;
Here manifold in mutability,
And infinite in beauty ; as the moods
Of the Immortals, and their heaven-born loves
Mingle and multiply for evermore.
And, as they gazed around them and above,
They saw with wonder everlasting forms,

Picturing the majesty of the One Soul
Common to all ; the ever-soaring love,
The aspiration after godlike things,
In sun-bathed mountain summits, whence arose
Mansions of higher spirits ; where enthroned
Sat the sage rulers of unnumber'd realms
Of subject Gods, glad spirits, that from them
Drew inspiration, as themselves had drawn
From the Allwise ; and the sun never set
In that high World, for both its fire and light
Were living substances that fed the soul,
Ev'n as the orb of Nature is the heart
Of natural things and fills them from itself.
And, if the spirits of the immortals sleep,
Or seem to sleep, forgetful for a while
Of their own blissful being, it is to see
Marvels and mysteries, more rarely wrought
Than could be shown to the awaken'd sense,
Indrawn to nearer commune with the Gods
Above them ; as on earth a weary child,
After some great jubilee, hears and sees
The festal flowers, the triumphs and the songs,
The music and the dancing, and the joy
In slumber multiplied a thousandfold.
So they hear sweeter words, and have a sight
Of fairer things ev'n in that fairest world.
Within the confines of the glorious Whole,
Whose grander aspects were the same to all,
Picturing the universal heart of Love,

And Good, and Truth that changed not, there were
found,

Or fashion'd wonderfully, inner worlds
Of beauty and of sweetness, more akin
To individual instincts ; valleys sunk
'Twixt mountain folds so lonely and so still
That nothing but a rockborn rill, a sound
Of quivering leaves, or songbird in the shade
Fill'd up the intervals 'twixt low-voiced words
Of lovers reunited, or first found
In this new World. Here some remember'd nook
Of childhood, burning in the memory, like
A ray of light from some forgotten life,
And garnish'd with sweet fancies that had grown
About it thro' long years, rose suddenly
Circled with all the fair things that the mind
Had clothed on the material ; not as thoughts,
Impalpable and shadowy, but rebuilt
Of living spirit-substance, made to mould
The spirit's own affections, till they grow
To solid semblance of the very soul."

Then spake the spouse of Psyche, "O my soul,
Thou wilt no more dream as thou dreamedst once,
That heaven, the habitation of the Gods,
Was something so dissever'd from thy world,
That they who enter'd would be sad at heart
With shadows of things gone ; that ears and eyes,
Once feasting on the beauty of the earth,
Would here be lacking to the unthralled soul ;

That only thought, turn'd inward on itself,
And memory, ranging thro' the ghostly past,
Should dower the Immortals ; that no voice
Of all thy friends should speak to thee again—
As one who walks on regal floors alone
Without a smile to welcome him, a hand
To lead him on, but only the great walls
To echo his low cry ; and if thy foes
Should nevermore torment thee as of old,
That even mortal sorrow, with the doom
Of utter nothing, would be better life
Than everlasting being, so far above
Both hope and fear. Behold all things are new,
Tho' like the old ; and dear familiar forms
Come at the bidding of the heart's desire.
And if there be things never seen before,
Haply they were foreshadow'd in some mood
Of raptured thought, some poesy, some dream
Dropt down from summer starlight, and appear,
Tho' wonderful, not stranger than the light
Of reawaken'd memories. What the heart
Yearn'd for, as missing to some mortal state,
Here crowns it in its immortality
With all perfection, and is hail'd at once
As hope fulfill'd, ev'n as the dear old face,
So well beloved under its grey hair,
And wrinkled brows remember'd on the earth,
Is known at once for all its hues of youth
Restored, its thousand graces, and the voice,

That welcomes to this land of happy souls
The pilgrim, late deliver'd from the glooms
Of failing nature, and the mist of tears ;
Or as a virgin daughter brings to mind
The lovely bride of the first days gone by.
All states advance by gentle steps, so small
That, tho' they be swifter than thought itself,
Seem slow in their progression ; the Allwise
Shakes not the guilty and rebellious soul
With sudden thunders, nor the simple heart
With light beyond endurance ; all things change
By secret motions imperceptible,
As the far-reaching voice of the great sea
Grows out of tiny ripples none can hear."

XVI

He ceased ; but one sweet thought possess'd them
both,
The memory of the joyful day to each,
The memory of that day, when first on earth
They saw the beauty of their dwelling-place,
The world of Nature, as the lavish Spring
Came forth to them, and first the love of her
Attuned their hearts, tho' far apart, in time
And space, to other sweeter love than that,
Denied them till this moment, when their hands
Were link'd together, and their fond eyes met
In heavenly interchange of soul, till then

Impossible, except in blissful dreams
Breathed to her soul from his. But, as their hearts
Went back to that first morn of youth and hope,
And tender yearnings, lo ! a sudden change!
The wonderworking of their glad new world,
Magic of Heaven ! For round about them grew,
In all perfection, all that vanish'd past,
More than imagination, tenfold clear
Of earthly bard, could compass. It was Spring ;
They saw the young leaves and the opening flowers,
They heard the woodland music, and all things
Made perfect concord with that perfect mood
Of sympathetic hearts, for evermore
To feed on unimaginable states
Of infinite variety, for ever
Painting themselves upon their subtle sense, .
Sublimed to keener touches of delight,
Than heretofore on earth the inmost trance
Of highest souls. And then they took their way,
Under a fragrant roof of pale green fronds,
And blossoms, into that appointed home
Where all things, lovely to the ear and eye,
Would bring joy in the morn, and hope at even,
And all sweet spirits, most akin to theirs,
Should hold high converse with them, and should
bring
Voices of wisdom to them, which their own
Should bear down to the lower, and at last
The mournful earth itself should hear and see

The beauty of their kingly countenances,
The light and music of the spheres divine.
Again they look'd into each other's eyes,
Drew thro' them from their twin immortal souls
That pure and perfect love, the inmost heaven
Of hearts in perfect harmony ; that love,
The reflex of whose golden Summer falls,
Thro' clouds of mortal sorrow, as a rare
Fleet wintry sunbeam, coming but to part ;
But leaves such blissful memories, hope is born
That it shall be made perfect, as was theirs.

NIOBE

PART I

I

DREAMING of ancient Niobe the Queen
Methought I had a vision of the Past,
And lo ! two spirits pass before me charm'd
By sympathetic magic to appear :
I see an old man with a kindly face,
Yet sorrowful ; he bears beneath his arms
Tablets and scrolls ; and by him, bending low,
Another aged form ; great age, it seems,
Lies on them both ; ah yes ! it is the nurse,
The guardian of children, and the man
Is the boys' teacher. See ! they start, they weep,
As tho' they had remember'd fearful things,
And mutter to each other : and I see
The morning mists upon the mountain-sides
Rise up and scatter into fragments vast,
Like winged giants soaring. Lo ! the state
Of a great city, standing on the steeps,
Shines forth, and fills the hollows of the hills,
And crests the many underslopes ; and higher
The barren heights come out against the light,

Like the dark forms of ever-frowning Gods.
The city, piled upon the airy heights,
Soars amid shadows, and unfolding clouds,
And broken fires of sunrise, crown'd with towers.
The aged man comes slowly up ; then stays
A while, and shades his forehead with his hand.
He lifts his head, and now he moves his lips
As one who speaks ; I seem to hear his words.
“ Ye call me to your presence, as though one
Were bidden to remember in the day
A dreadful dream of night, whereof alone
The huge and formless shadow hangs on him.
Ye bid me look back on the woes of Time,
Out of Eternity ; ye bid me tell
Of that disastrous day, whose memory still,
With all its terrors,—as it looms again
Slowly from deeps within me, shut and barr'd
For many thousand years—is as a blast,
Borne into blissful Edens of our world,
From dismal caves where weeping spirits cower
In darkness, dread, and cold : it thus befell.

II

“ One morning, as the Queen of all the land,
The stately Niobe, walk'd amid her sons,
And daughters by the river, thro' smooth walks
Under the rustling May-leaves, and beheld
The fish glance sunward from the curling stream,
And fluttering flocks of finches sweep and twirl

'Mid the low greeneries of sweetbrier rose,
And laurel coverts ; and look'd on the forms
And aspects, and the loveliness of all
Her own fair flock, the little ones she loved ;
For, in her love and tenderness, she named
All little ones, whom she remember'd, such,
Tho' some were tall youths, and their sisters past
The days of childhood. As they reach'd the plain,
Whence all the towered regal city rose,
Back'd by tall, sunlit, snow-white summer-cloud,
And azure deeps between, and sometimes flash'd
A sudden glory from it, and then drown'd
In a soft purple twilight ; they could hear
The trumpets from the citadel, and saw
The helmets of the armed men, and caught
The shouting of the eager citizens,
As tho' for victory ; and then a cry,
That rose amid the palaces and fanes,
As though a sea had flooded all the place,
And roar'd unseen within it. For that day,
That very day, the last stone of the walls
Of the new city had been set, to sounds
Of music, and the festival was great.
And the great king Amphion heard his name
Roll'd up high as the topmost towers, and back
Roll'd from the topmost towers unto the plain.
For all was finish'd, and the king was glad ;
And the fair mother of his children heard
The triumph, and her heart was glad and free.

III

"Alas ! like as in calmest summer hours
Hurricanes gather, earthquakes rouse themselves,
In the serenest moment of her bliss
Pride started up within her suddenly,
A hissing serpent's head amid the flowers.
She whisper'd to herself, 'Oh ! am I not
The queen of this fair region ? All I see
Looks up to me and smiles ; and all I hear
Seems like the voice of Nature singing to me,
Wafting my thoughts in music back to me' :
The trumpets with their echoes fann'd her pride ;
The shouting from the city swell'd her praise ;
The winds flew round her and her children fair,
Whispering—'Thou art more blessed than all women
Widow'd, or childless ; ay, than all, who bear
Children less beautiful than these thine own.'
'And are there any not less beautiful ?'
She cried—'who dares say nay ? The Gods themselves
Might envy me, as they behold me walk
Before my royal city, thro' these paths
Of songbirds and of roses, this sweet time
Of Spring flowers, which boon Nature lavishes ;
Though all she bears in beauty rival not
One of their lovelocks, one of their dear smiles.'
And then she call'd them to her ; and they came
Each in his turn, and each as she was named.
Fondly she read each lovely, loving face ;

Softly she kiss'd each on the spotless brow ;
And looking up to heaven with—Was it then
A smile of heartfelt, pious, holy love,
Grateful to the Immortals for the boon
Of such a race as hers ? Was it to vow
The service of their future lives to them
Who had bestow'd it ? Heavens ! what did I see ?
Was there a Fury, hidden in those walks,
Beneath the laurel shadows that bright morn ?
She stood, and seem'd to hearken to a voice
That spake within her ; all at once her brow
Flush'd, and her eyes grew starlike, and she look'd
Heavenward, and raised her arms ; but folded not
Her hands, as one in prayer, as one who knew
Her own supreme felicities, but own'd
The great Gods for the givers : ah me ! ah me !
Dread day, dread moment of fatality !
Dread words self-dooming ! For I heard her voice
Sent up exultingly. ‘Come down and see,
Ye that are Queens in heaven, as I on earth ;
And, if I cannot match ye in myself,
Look on these children ; have I ever seen ye
Whom men call the Immortals ? Are ye Gods
Who can be vanquish'd by us on the earth ?
And needs must yield—whose offspring rival yours
In beauty, and outrival in all else.
Mother of Artemis and Phœbus, whom
Men call Latona, know I what thou art,
Or they, while I behold with these glad eyes

This very day all my beloved ones
Delighting, and delighted? Bliss is yours,
And loveliness is yours, and yours is power;
So say the stoled priests; but they are men,
And chant of that they know not—if it be—
Beauty, prosperity, and pow'r are mine;
So I am equal to ye, O ye Gods.
And, more than power and riches, I can feel
This vital moving personality,
Radiant of joy, and drinking in delights,
Giving and taking love the flower of life;
So I am equal to ye, O ye Gods.
But I am greater than ye are, O Gods,
Tho' but a mortal woman on the earth;
For they are mine, and theirs is innocence;
They have done no wrong, can ye say the same?
Come down, and see if there be one of ye
Worthy to stand beside the least of these:
Lo! I am greater than ye are, O Gods!
Just then they pass'd from out the bowery walks
Into the open; and lo! on one hand
The pillar'd front of dread Latona's shrine;
The marble stair throng'd with the votaries
Bearing their offerings; and the long-robed priests
Enter'd before, hymning a sacred song,
And vanish'd in the temple's dim retreats,
Shaking their thuribles, amid the fumes
Of odours, and the breath of orisons.
And, while they pass'd, and the last note was heard

Dying amid the incense, the great doors
Closed with a brazen clang ; and, when it hush'd,
A thunder spoke beyond the purple hills.

IV

“The faithless morning of that fatal day,
The whole air drew in thirstily the breath
Of the awaken'd earth ; for pleasant showers
Had fallen in the night, and leaf and flower
Quiver'd in thickets, and in garden nooks.
And the smooth ocean of the woodlands waved
With bright, and dark, far up the mountain-side.
That morning, when their school tasks had been done,
They rushed from under the great portico,
Down thro' the sloping gardens to the plain,
The teacher following ; and after them
The mother, and the sisters, and the nurse
Came up with staid steps, and in ordered file.
The noble youth, on that same festal morn,
The promise of the city, henceforth to be
The champions of the native land, the heads
Of armies, met together on the plain ;
But none were there so excellent as they
The sons of Niobe. Tho' few their years,
With subtle instinct, and with native skill
They seem'd to antedate their manhood's might,
As tho' foreseeing, in the days to come,
The assembled nations, and the laurel crowns.

And the fresh herbage of the plain, along
The riverside, sprang under their light feet,
As though it were rejoicing with the joy
Of their young hearts. They arm'd for playful strife
Of strength and art ; some made the bowstring twang,
Till the swift arrow clave the central shield ;
Some hurl'd the javelin till its greater weight
Vied with the arrow's swiftness ; and some ran
To match the winged weapons with their feet.
And there were wrestlers who had heard of men
Matchless for might and cunning ; and, in faith
That their light limbs were equal, and their skill
Not less, set limb to limb, and brow to brow.
The elder ones ran with the running steed,
And sprang upon him lightly ; others stood
High up in chariots, circling the smooth green
With rival wheels ; some rode one horse, and held
Another by the rein, until they reach'd
The goal, then sprang from one upon the other
Nimbly and swiftly ; others, more withdrawn,
Hurl'd the flat disk, or ball ; or proud of strength,
The heritage of strength, they ventured on
The perilous leap itself with weighted arms.
They laugh'd, they sang ; they interchanged their sports ;
Then paused awhile, and soon resumed ; and mirth
Seem'd to renew their lavish'd force. Hard by
The river murmur'd and the thickets sigh'd ;
But, in a hush between their jocund cries,
A thunder spoke beyond the purple hills.

V

"I saw four daughters, fresh as April flowers,
Struck down, four sons as the Immortals fair ;
And all the spectre of that angry day
Is pictured on my soul. Whene'er I will
I see the dreadful image fix'd as death ;
So one may see a fearful thing in sleep
Clear as the waken'd eyesight. First there crept
A sullen shadow o'er the meadow sward ;
The birds flew wildly, and their notes were shrill,
The thickets shiver'd, and the poplars sway'd,
And the grey river ruffled angrily.
The mountains frown'd, for over them there roll'd
A purple vastness, like a higher range,
Until it met the midday sun, and flow'd
Across its disk, with jagged edges, black
And threatening. All at once, on that dark pile
Of thunders, rose a giant, in his hand
A golden bow, that caught the light beyond,
And seem'd alive with quivering sunny flame ;
And on his steps follow'd another form,
Lesser, yet mighty. And they bent the knee
Upon that thunderous bulwark, and then broke
A storm, amid whose voices manifold
I heard a great cry thro' the rending winds,
That with the echoes seem'd to pass afar
Through all the windings of the marble hills ;
A cry as of a warrior when he sets

His brazen heel upon his foeman's helm,
Ha ! ha ! and all the volumed alps of cloud
Bore the triumphal laughter to and fro !
The eldest-born, just blossom'd into youth,
Gave promise of that might, henceforth to snatch
The glory of great chiefs, and rule a world,
Won by his arms, and win love from that world.
Heroic stature seem'd not what it was ;
For each limb, in its concord with the rest,
Built up that pure and perfect excellence,
That veils its own perfections ; for therein
A world of inner harmonies is hid.

He, and the second, younger by a year,
Stood up, and, leaning forward, whirl'd and lash'd
Their rival chariots round the river plain.
Up from the plain there rose no dusty cloud,
But only pure drops of the nightly shower
Dash'd from the wheels like sparkles ; and the dogs
Bay'd at their heels, and strove against each other,
And the swift chariot horses ; prone, intent
On their fix'd aims, they heeded neither shouts,
Nor warning cries, nor barking hounds, nor sounds
Of the dread winds, and onward thunderbursts ;
Their locks were floated on the mountain gusts,
Their mantles flown' behind them. As they wheel'd
Round by the corner of the grassy mead
Nighest the river, the first arrow flew.
The boy fell sidelong, and the left-hand wheel
Pass'd o'er his neck. Then the scared brother shriek'd ;

Yet, reckless of himself, flung by the reins,
And then himself upon the turf, beside
The dying one ; and while he raised him up,
And the warm blood stain'd all the green with red,
The second arrow struck the younger one.
Thus, lock'd together in a last embrace,
They look'd upon me as I ran to them,
And lifted their pale heads despairingly ;
And in a whisper, just ere the last breath,
The youngest utter'd dreaming, not awake
To the old world of sorrow ; 'O dear friend ;
'Tis best to die in battle ; do not weep.
We thought it was a fable that we read
This morn with thee about a warrior's fate ;
And then we swore that we would die like him ;
Now we are stretch'd upon the field of fame.
And tell our mother, and the little ones,
We had no fear, and so there was no pain.'

VI

" But hark ! there is another sound from far,
A cry from off the city's topmost tower.
Who is it that descends into the plain
With madden'd haste, mounts the first ready steed,
And spurs beneath the gateway ? who is he,
Flashing the sunlight from his mail and helm ?
Just as Amyclas fell he reached the lad.
He cast his plumed casque down on the earth,

As tho' to brave the bitter Gods to take
His own life for the lad's, the timeworn man
For the untimely boy ; but o'er his head
He lifted up his shield against the light
To screen that tender one ; alas ! too late.
For as Amphion raised the stripling up,
With the last beam that lit his dying eye,
He look'd into his father's face, and said ;—
'I die ; but it is nothing to the grief
That must have seized me, had ye gone before,
My father and my mother ; oft and oft
That very fear has been as death to me ;
Your time is less, and I shall see ye soon.'
Two younger ones, divided by a year,
Playmates, who scarcely breathed without each other,
Yet wrangled in their play, and then forgot
All passions in fresh moments of delight,
Just then were redly fronting one another
With loud tongues, and uplifted hands ; and all
The stormy darkness, and the shrilling cries
Were unregarded ; and the deathful dooms
They flung at one another in hot words
Fell on them swift and real, and they sank
Into each other's arms, as heretofore,
Fair infants, after anger, ere they slept,
They had embraced each other and forgiven.
As for the youngest, oh ! he ran to me,
The little one just eight years old ; he stretch'd
His hands unto me, and he hid his head

Under my robe ; alas ! the arrow flew,
Sharpest to me, and scatter'd all my skirts
With his warm blood ; I saw it and lived on !

VII

“ The first-born daughter flies not ; but she stands
Fearless, and sets her foot upon a rock ;
I see her upward eyes, and braidless hair.
She stretches her white arms, as tho' to plead
Her youth, her beauty, and her innocence,
Peerless Aglaïa ; but the arrow flew !
How shall I speak of her, the rapturous soul ?
She would rejoice with jocund hearts, and mourn
With them who wept ; and a rare sweetness breathed
Through her sad sympathies, while tearful notes
Sometimes would mingle with her merry songs.
But, tho' to grief she never yielded up
Her whole soul, listening to young hope, sometimes
She soar'd alike above both grief and joy,
And took, for wings of rapture, holy thoughts
In equipoise of solemn fear and love,
For upward flight. Oh then her voice would swell
In solitary song, so holy-pure
That the Immortals might have leant their ears
And listen'd lovingly. Ofttimes the face
Of glorious Nature shone into her soul
With such a power, as into lovers' hearts
The beauty of the one beloved one,

Which, like the unseen but irresistible air
Kindling with lightnings, passes into flame.
And something new and strange, a pulse of life,
Unfelt till then within her, answer'd to
'The lights and shadows of the outer day.
Then was she fill'd with that she loved the most,
The godlike moods that wing'd her from the earth,
And all its clouds of trouble ; and, when again
She touch'd the sad world and mortality,
They saw she had held converse, of such kind
As made her heart more loving than before.
The very pride, which in her mother's soul
Wax'd perilous, was temper'd in her own
By all-subduing sweetness, as harsh notes
Of dissonance a moment jar the ear,
Then drown in the full flood of harmony.
Her father's songs had breathed into her peace ;
And his high art, to which the city rose,
Had built up the great palace of her soul !

VIII

" Agatha follow'd, gentle, yet a maid
Of other make. No glories in her blazed,
Able to drink up sorrows, no wild griefs
Piled dust upon her head, or rent her hair
Or froze her temperate instincts. She was glad
With simple meditations, free of pride
And passion, free too of the vain self-love

That, foe to others, profits not itself.
As a lone bird that hath a single note,
She sorrow'd most in silence ; but she loved
To hear kind friends about her, and the flow
Of even converse neither low nor loud ;
Communion of fresh feeling, breathing pure
As ever-welcome green, or healthful air ;
Such as joins hearts together, as the herb
Of the green champaign runs from flower to flower.
But she was wakeful as the little bird,
That, nestled in high leafage, sees afar,
And then flies down, and pecks the grain ; her eyes
Could clearly see what others pass'd in haste ;
And knew the value of poor lowly hearts,
As the plain country-folk, who pluck wild weeds
And press strange virtues from them ; though a child,
They call'd her wise as they who live and learn.
No care was wanting, could she minister
To poverty, or pain, or such as fate,
Or ruthless stormy change, or swift mischance
Had beggar'd of their hopes : and she could see,
Through her calm eyes, where fortune might come back,
Better than their vex'd souls disconsolate,
Despairing. And sometimes she show'd to them
Things that might be, and, if they will'd it, would,
As one who makes his lantern light the dark
Before them, of long galleries underground,
'Till the poor prisoners, reckless what shall be,
Come forth into the air and sunny day

Once more, and wonder. So, tho' young, she was
An oracle to others, young as she,
And grew in their affections, as the green
Turf, or grey cloud is welcome, after sight
Of dazzling sunlight, or of crimson flowers.
She listened always to her sisters' tongues ;
Heard utterances of passions, prides and fears,
And triumphs ; and her words fill'd in the lull
Of theirs with some well-timed monotony,
That drew back their wild spirits to a sense
Of Time, and Space, and strong Necessity ;
As one who lays his hand upon his eyes
Sunblinded, so that he may see his way.
I see her, true and tender-hearted one,
Flying before the wrath ; and, tho' she fears,
She turns her eyes upon a brother dear
Struck down beside her, and she leans to him
Despite the peril ; but the arrow flew !
Then came twin sisters, mirrors of each other,
With their right hands they held their mantles up
Curl'd by the wind, in their pale aspects fear
Past utterance ; but all the gracious curves
Of their young limbs shone thro' their airy vests ;
A softer beauty theirs, and something less
Than noblest ; as they ran twin arrows flew !

IX

"Then she, who was the one surpassing rose
In that proud garden of delightsome Youth,

Ilia, whose form and face were in themselves
The centre of the beauties of them all :
How shall I speak of her? 'Twere vain to tell
Of Agatha the wise, Hilaria
The mirthful, and Aglaïa rapture-soul'd,
While she, without their inner loveliness,
Witch'd by the magic of her countenance
Free hearts, and spell-bound every rebel tongue.
Did young Hilaria's silvery laughter call
To dance and play ; did Agatha enthrall
By her clear words and kindness ; did the voice
Of rapt Aglaïa melt and fire with song?
Ilia, with her unutter'd harmonies,
The lights and shadows of her artless power
Cast on her face, was stronger than them all.
And they who heard her voice—as 'twere the chime
Of a low music, gushing from among
Sweet mountain waters—knew their senses bound
With links invisible of subtlest might.
She tamed the boy's heart, and with strengthless arms
She vanquish'd ; they who saw her fled with sighs.
And when, amid the turmoil of the world,
In afterdays, some interval of calm
Call'd up old memories, or in dreams of sleep
Came visions, unremember'd she appear'd,
With the same starshine in her dewy eyes,
Dark blue, the same resistless charming smile,
That, when they woke, they wept for that flown dream.
I saw her flying, like some tender flower

Bent forward by the storm, before it falls ;
Swiftly she runs, but turns her head aside,
And with her left arm on her shoulder stays
Her robe, and with her right hand on her knee
Presses it down ; I see her golden curls
Stray from beneath the braids ; I seem to see
Still in my memory that most perfect mould
Of gentleness and grace ; the arrow flew !

X

“ Hilaria, sweet delight of heart and eyes,
Her mother’s comforter, her father’s joy,
A sun in winter, and a summer wind,
Fill’d all the house with laughter and with songs,
As ’twere a fountain flashing in the light.
Her winged spirit, like the breeze of morn,
Thrill’d thro’ my soul and memory its own self,
And flew around me, like a circling fire,
Whose golden sparkles whirl’d above my head.
Her voice broke in upon my barred hours,
Like song-birds thro’ my lattice in the dawn.
I did not put her by when I was glad,
For then I triumph’d with her like a king ;
I did not bid her cease when I was dull,
For then I drew fresh courage from her cheer.
My child, Hilaria, when I saw thee then
I shut my eyes, and pray’d for death myself,
So thou wert spared ; she utter’d no lament,

But, softly creeping to her mother's arms,
She nestled near her heart, poor little bird,
Caught in a snowstorm, and that regal form
With mute instinctive tenderness and care
In a last agony of love, and fear
Held her, as tho' they two must fall together,
Scarce knowing what she did, for her large eyes
Follow'd about the plain the flying feet
Of her doom'd sons ; and once she rais'd her head
Up from her mother's arms, like some pale flower
Soon to be dash'd beneath the coming hail.
She said, 'I see my brothers lying still ;
Are they asleep tired with their play ? Alas !
They are so still I think they must be dead ;
And I see blood upon them, I see blood !
Why must they die, sweet mother, and so soon ?
I too will die, my mother, if thou wilt ;
And yet I cannot for I see thee there,
O mother !' As she sobb'd the arrow flew.

XI

"I stood apart, helpless to shield from ill
My well-beloved, as one who meets the wind
Roll'd down a rocky pass 'twixt mountain walls,
And, 'twixt the onward struggle and the force
That drives him back, stands palsied. So I stood,
Hearing and seeing all the dreadful things,
The vengeance and the sorrow ; the wild cry

That, as a flash at midnight, lighten'd forth,
Then quench'd in the death darkness ; the proud voice,
Jocund but now, rebelling against Heaven,
Of hopeful boyhood fronted by despair ;
The lamentations dying into sighs
Of stricken girls, their long locks, dark or fair,
Blown backwards in their flight ; the lovely arms
Stretch'd forward, and the young hands clasp'd in prayer.
I saw the mother, awful in her woe,
The glory of her pride eclipsed at noon,
Majestic amid misery, as the one
Unfallen column of an ancient house,
Whose shadow falls on shafts, and capitals,
And carved-work around her. As her pride
Wasted to drear unutterable thoughts,
She look'd down on the chambers of her heart,
Where late her loves were garner'd ; no tear stood
In her dilated orbs ; while horror froze
Her conscience like the fears that in a dream
Would wing us, yet have power to stay our flight,
And lock us to the earth. When all were dead
I sped from one to other in vain haste,
Seeking my doom with theirs ; but I was spared ;
Till years on years, and deep old age at last
Made me oblivious of all things beside.
But oh ! I never ceased to see that day,
To hear the last cries utter'd, and to bear
Graven within me their last flying steps,
Their last imploring looks, their last faint words.

And, now that it is granted me awhile
To look, as on a picture long time hid,
The memory of earth-sorrows, all things flow
Back to me, even as then, and I could weep,
Ev'n though a spirit—for we feel the more
The more that we are free of mortal dust—
Did I not know that they are with me here.

PART II

I

“I too remember, in the after years,
The long-hair’d Niobe, when she was old,
Sitting alone, without the city gates,
Upon the ground ; alone she sat, and mourn’d.
Her watchers, mindful of her royal state,
Her widowhood, and sorrows, follow’d her
Far off, when she went forth, to be alone
In lonely places ; and at set of sun
They won her back by some fond phantasy,
By telling her some tale of the gone days
Of her dear lost ones, promising to show her
Some faded garland, or some broken toy,
Dusty and dim, which they had found, or feign’d
To have found, some plaything of their infant hours.
Within the echoes of a ruin’d court
She sat and mourn’d, with her lamenting voice,
Melodious in sorrow, like the sound

Of funeral hymns ; for in her youth she sang
Along the myrtle valleys in the spring,
Plucking the fresh pinks and the hyacinths,
With her fair troop of girls, who answer'd her
Silverly sweet, so that the lovely tribe
Were Nature's matchless treble to the last
Delicious pipe, pure, warbling, dewy, clear.
In summer and in winter, that lorn voice
Went up, like the struck spirit of this world,
Making the starry roof of heaven tremble
With her lament, and agony, and all
The crowned Gods in their high tabernacles
Sigh unawares, and think upon their deeds.
Her guardians let her wander at her will,
For all could weep for her ; had she not been
The first and fairest of that sunny land,
And blest with all things ; doubly crown'd with power
And beauty, doubly now discrown'd and fallen ?
Oh ! none would harm her, only she herself ;
And chiefly then when they would hold her back,
And sue her to take comfort in her home,
Or in the bridal chambers of her youth,
Or in the old gardens, once her joy and pride,
Or the rose-bowers along the river-shore
She loved of old, now silent and forsaken.
For then she fled away, as though in fear,
As if she saw the spectres of her hours
Of joyaunce pass before her in the shapes
Of her beloved ones. But most she chose

Waste places, where the moss and lichen crawled,
And the wild ivy flutter'd, and the rains
Wept thro' the roofless ruins, and all seem'd
To mourn in symbols, and to answer to her,
Showing her outward that she was within.
The unregarding multitude pass'd on,
Because her woe was a familiar sight.
But some there were that shut their ears and fled,
And they were childless ; the rose-lipt and young
Felt that imperial voice and desolate
Strike cold into their hearts ; children at play
Were smit with sudden silence, with their toys
Clutch'd in their hands, forgetful of the game.
Aged she was yet beautiful in age.
Her beauty, thro' the cloud of years and grief,
Shone as a wintry sun ; she never smiled,
Save when a darkness pass'd across the sun,
And blotted out from her entranced eyes
Disastrous shapes that rode upon his disk,
Tyrannous visions, armed presences ;
And then she sigh'd and lifted up her head,
And shed a few warm tears. But when he rose,
And her sad eyes unclosed before his beams,
She started up with terrors in her look,
That wither'd up all pity in affright,
And ran about, like one with Furies torn,
And rent her hair, and madly threaten'd Heaven,
And call'd for retribution on the Gods !
Crying, 'O save me from Him, He is there,

Oh let me wear my little span of life.
I see Him in the centre of the sun ;
His face is black with wrath ! thou angry God,
I am a worthless thing, a childless mother,
Widow'd and wasted, old and comfortless,
But still I am alive ; wouldest thou take all ?
Thou who hast snatch'd my hopes and my delights,
Thou who hast kill'd my children, wouldest thou take
The little remnant of my days of sorrow,
Which the sharp winds of the first winter days,
Or the first night of frost may give unto thee ?
For never shall I seek again that home
Where they are not ; cold, cold shall be the hearth
Where they were gather'd, cold as is my heart !
Oh ! if my living lot be bitterness,
'Tis sweeter than to think, that, if I go
Down to the dust, then I shall think no more
Of them I loved and lost, the thoughts of whom
Are all my being, and shall speak no more,
In answer to their voices in my heart,
As though it were mine ear, rewording all
Their innocent delights, and fleeting pains,
Their infant fondnesses, their little wants,
And simple words. Oh ! while I am, I dream
Of those who are not ; thus my anguish grows
My solace, as the salt surf of the seas
Clothes the sharp crags with beauty.' Then her mood
Would veer to madness, like a windy change
That brings up thunder, and she raised her voice,

Crying, ‘And yet they are not, they who were,
And never more shall be ! accursed dreams !’
And, suddenly becoming motionless,
The bright hue from her cheeks and forehead pass’d,
And, full of awful resignation, fixing
Her large undazzled orbs upon the sun,
She shriek’d, ‘Strike, God, thou canst not harm me
more !’

II

“She would remember all their little ways
In days of innocence, when all the loves,
Which to grown men are empty nothing, stirr’d
Their childish fancies, as the unseen wind
Kindles a fire of straw. ‘I see the day,
The morn, the hour, our first-born woke from sleep,
And stared with great eyes, and with outstretch’d hands,
To see his image in the polish’d brass,
The corselet of his father, as he came
To bid me farewell for a day of raid ;
And, as I wept, he touch’d the falling tear
With his soft finger.’ And again, ‘I see
The dear ones flying from a squall of rain.
So blinding was it that the youngest stood
Prisoner of whirling waters for a while,
His bonnet blown away, and his flown hair
Blinding him more, and from the whirlwind came
The thin voice, like a harpstring’s waning plaint ;
Then his fond sister rush’d into the mist,

Frighted from every fear by love alone,
And he came forth, as one by water-nymph
Pluck'd from the drowning. Once the second boy
Was foward, and his teacher barr'd him in
For a whole summerday ; the little one,
His brother, sought him after midday meal,
Bearing untasted fresh fruits in his hand
For the poor captive, and for his sweet sake
The sinner was forgiven. I saw the four—
Their added ages number'd eighteen years—
Playing on the river-shore ; the eldest-born
Was Jove unto the second, and the second
Look'd on the third like Phœbus, and the third
Was oracle unto the fourth, and he
Echoed the little blisses that he heard
In tinier accent ; and I blest those babes,
Whose awful love look'd ever up and on,
From the first-born who took his mother's hand
And voice for God's, and told them, 'Hush she told me,'
To little Three who could no higher look
Than to great Four, but not to giant Six !'
After a little pause, she spoke again
So lovingly, a music seem'd to rill
Straight from her inmost being, and her soul
Thrill'd the air round her, tho' the voice was low.
'O mystic world ! O wondrous state of man !
O all ye ages, rolling good and ill,
And life and death. Oh ! what a note were lost
Out of the universal harmony,

If children's voices were not heard on earth,
Above the deep bass of lamenting woe,
With winged rapture of delighted thoughts,
With soaring tones of exultation sweet
Cleaving the azure, music, fit to turn
Justice to mercy, mercy into love,
And love into a signal to unbar
The golden gates of the immortal life
To mortal men, no more to close again !'

III

"A hopeless cripple with a weary face
Said; 'Death is good, and they who die in youth
The sooner taste the nectar of the Gods,
The which to taste is everlasting life,
And ebbless joy, free power and thought undimm'd ;
So weep no more for any thou hast lost.
Envy, but pity not, unless thy pity,
Presumptuous as a Titan, dares to show
Its sad pale brows above the throne of Jove.'
She laugh'd, and said in scorn, 'If Death were good,
The Gods were not immortal ; they have piled
All ills on this side of the golden gates,
And throned the monstrous skeleton of Death
Upon the mountain of our miseries ;
So that the last and worst calamity,
The gleam of his inexorable spear,
In the cold shadows of our living woes

Shows like a sunbeam, and we welcome it,
Calling Death good because it is not Life.'
He listen'd to her words, but answer'd not ;
Then slowly turn'd into the public walk,
And being into contemplation drawn,
And haply into self-forgetfulness,
By those last words, he stumbled and he fell.
Just then a horseman, terrible in youth,
Spurring a hot steed with his nostrils wide,
Drave on him, and he had but time to shriek
' Hold ! hold ! I die,' when under those black hoofs
I had beheld his white hairs red with blood ;
But the wise beast, more pitiful than man,
Or Gods, glanced wide and harm'd no hair of him ;
As he rose up she laugh'd again in scorn—
The childless have no pity—and he said,
' Pardon me if the presence of the foe,
Beneath the corselet of philosophy
Shook my weak heart with fear ; alas ! alas !
'Tis that the real sorrows of old age
Are worse than aught we know of mystic Death,
And we call madly on our enemy ;
But under the uplifted angry arm
Of the gigantic Shadow none may stand
Undaunted, save Despair, whose tearless orbs
Are stiff with ice, that eats away the heart
Worse than all aches, and pangs, and doleful throes
Over the wintry spaces of Despair
Death's Self is king ; sighs, curses, agonies,

Proud blasphemies, uncomfortable tears,
Cease ; piteous cries, and beatings of the breast,
And gnashing teeth and lamentations cease,
Ev'n as the loud winds in the days of frost.'
Then Niobe arose, and to the height
Of her full stature slowly drew her limbs
Majestical, and from beneath her veil
Show'd her pale aspect, like a marble tomb
Lit with the ever-burning lamp of grief ;
And, with the gaze of an immortal, turn'd
Her tearless eyes upon him. 'Know'st thou not,
Know'st thou who I am, ah ! know'st thou not
That I am Niobe, that Niobe
Is but Despair, Despair ! I am Despair !'
She shouted with a voice imperial,
That woke the lonely echoes of the place,
- And scared the nestling birds that haunted there.

IV

" If I could say that solace ever came
To that lone heart, 'twas comfort, like the grey
Stillness of twilight when the winds have lull'd,
Darkness of night, that seems as day, against
The utter blackness of a lampless cave.
And most she loved the dim autumnal days
When the thin rain fell stealthily from heaven,
And one by one the beautiful bright leaves
Flitted to earth ; ah ! then she freely wept,
For gentle Nature seem'd to weep with her.

She wept, and spake not ; softly sighing airs
Breathed through an aged cypress that stood by,
And the last sweetness of the dying year,
In tender emblems of her woful state,
Soothed her heart into quiet with their spells.
I look'd upon her, though she saw me not,
And heard her chant to a sad Lydian air
Low words, that sometimes flash'd up, like a flame
From smouldering embers ; thus I heard her sing.
(‘Ah ! woe is me ! for none is like to me !’)

‘This night I dreamt a dream of mingled light,
And darkness, which hath brought me some faint hope
Of something yet to be beyond this world,
The gleam whereof should lead us on the ways
Of sorrow, wanderers thro’ the night, who seek
First comings of the dawn ; ’twas thus I dreamt :
(Ah ! woe is me ! for none is like to me !)
It seem’d a morning of the early spring,
An April morn ; light-pinion’d airs did stream
Thro’ the pomegranate, and the almond bowers,
And, like the wandering bees, did charge their wings
With precious things and new ; the earth was green,
And heaven its mingled shadows and sweet lights
Pour’d down upon the waters and the woods,
Softly as their young breath flow’d from the hearts
Of my dear children ; from beneath the leaves
Of the fresh thickets, and the living plots
Beside the streams and fountains, where the red

Anemone and the gold crocus flamed,
The rapid song of merry finches rang.
(Ah ! woe is me ! for none is like to me !)
It seem'd again that lovely day forlorn,
That day which did arise so beautiful,
That day which did go down so miserable,
The great day of my gladness and my grief,
Day sweeter unto me than aught had been,
Darker than aught shall be in this dark world :
(Ah ! woe is me ! for none is like to me !)
The poplar, with its fresh and quivering leaf,
Beside the river waters whisper'd oft
Its vernal music ; the deep sky was piled
With stately clouds, thro' whose tall arches flow'd,
And silver portals, glory from the throne
Of Him who fed his pride with my despair ;
(Ah ! woe is me ! for none is like to me !)
Ev'n as I look'd upon the lovely sight,
Methought a grey veil dropt 'twixt earth and heaven ;
Noon turn'd to twilight, twilight into night,
An earthquake seem'd to shudder thro' the world,
And then a whirlwind rent the fresh green woods,
And blossom'd champaign, and upgather'd all
The promise of the year, and swept it off
With dust, and hail and thunder ; then the moon
Came out upon a desert, and the rack
Had huddled over, and the winds were still ;
(Ah ! woe is me ! for none is like to me !)
And, thro' the mingling torrents of dread sounds,

Voices of anger and of fear, with wails
Of lamentation, such as seem'd to rise
Together from the inmost heart of All,
And ebb'd away among the tempest-clouds,
Till their faint echoes, and the dying winds
Were indistinguishable, and silence fell
At last upon the wreck of all that world
Of beauty and of music, silence deep
And drear! worse than the tumult of the storm :
(Ah ! woe is me ! for none is like to me !)
I hid my eyes beneath my robe, I cried
For death, and sank upon the earth in swoon,
And lapsed, methought, into a mystic sense
Of years, and years that roll'd for ever on,
Of years that grew to cycles, with a sound
Like the great tread of armies. Then all thought,
And memory quench'd, until a whisper came,
As the first breath of morn, and I sprang up,
And saw with awful wonder what I saw.
The sun was rising on that wreck of things,
And all the mountains gather'd up again,
Like troubled kings that fold their robes in haste,
Their long dark shadows ; and across the plain
Came swiftly One, who seem'd no shape of Time,
But an Immortal, for his presence cast
No darkness from it ; and from every step
Life flow'd as fast as death from burning fire !
Across the realm he moved with speed of flame ;
On either hand the herbless wilderness—

Where once o'er all the green width of the land
The loving Spring had breathed, and from her flung
Uncounted treasures, crowns, and golden cups,
And silver stars, and with a wand of might
Changed every gem that sleeps beneath the earth
To living flowers—once more put on a robe
Of many colours, but 'twas Summer now.
A deeper azure, a serener air
Infolded this new world, and every spray,
And every flower, that had been blown away,
Was now surpass'd by one more beautiful !
Each living thing became a nobler life,
And every fashion a more perfect form,
And every odour a diviner soul.
The trees were taller, and the vernal vales
More full of light ; the many-voiced birds
More rapturous and vital in the joy
Of their new songs, now vocal with a sense
Of something inward more than aught without.
I heard a voice from Him who swept the plain,
Answer'd in golden echoes without end,
'Daughter, be of good cheer, for none are lost.'
And, looking toward the mountains, I beheld
A thousand torrents, smit with morning light,
Dance downward, and o'ertop the rocky edge
Of the waste watercourses, and fling up
Into the sunlight sparkles of their rain ;
And all those torrents seem'd to sing together
With a great voice, as tho' their several streams

Were thunderous organ-pipes, of the full joy
Of unborn hearts ; of the oncoming years,
When heaven and earth should breathe and pulse
 together

In one full concord, and this world should be
Sown with all truths, as the waste torrent-beds
Were fill'd with waters, even to the brim,
From the high summits radiant in the sun.
And, thro' the veil of rainbow-tinted dews
That floated o'er the waters, far above
The splendid clouds upon the heights of dawn,
A very city of the Immortal Gods—
Whence He had flown who stood before me now—
Terrace on terrace, dome on dome ; through all
The sun shone, filling it with such a light,
As might ray forth from the whole world of gems
Gather'd together into one. I cried
With a heart-cry, and with that cry awoke :
And there was nothing but my sorrow left,
And the faint shadows of the things I saw.
(Ah ! woe is me ! for none is like to me !)
A little space, and then once more I swoon'd
Into a dream of wonder. Lo ! a change !
I stood upon Olympus, and, methought,
I was in presence of the awful Gods,
The ancient giants, tyrannous and strong,
The vengeful rulers of this scorned world ;
The setting sun shone with a blood-red glare
Upon their golden thrones, where now they sat

In fearful waiting for they knew not what.
A rushing wind, like roaring cataracts, like
The howl of flame, and He stood in the midst,
A peerless form, that in its godlike strength
And beauty show'd the likeness of them all
Wrought into perfect glory : there He stood
Tall giant, king more mighty than them all.
But what is this ? Instead of crowns like theirs,
He wore a wreath of thorns upon his head,
And gazed up with a supplianting brow,
And eyes wherein all sorrows seem'd to weep,
And, in that light that only fell on Him,
And made the sunlight darkness, and at once
Cast all their shuddering faces into shade,
I saw, and wonder'd, on that forehead pale
Great drops of blood that fell upon the ground.
He stretch'd his hand, and hush'd the whirling wind,
To utter silence deep as in a tomb :
And in a moment all those throned kings,
Changed, as it were, to marble images,
Sat still, and bow'd in slumber. As I look'd
The light waned, and an ashen deathly grey
Stole o'er the dread assembly, like the moon's
Funereal glimmer through a wintry mist.
Each regal hand fell sceptreless, and all
The forms and aspects of their endless youth
Shrunk into eyeless skeletons ; my feet
Felt as they crept through heavy dust of death ;
The holy mountain of the Immortal Gods,

The very mountain underneath me sank
And vanish'd like a shadow ; and again
I stood upon the plain. Again 'tis morn ;
And He was there and standing by my side ;
Again I saw the city by the sun,
And the bright rivers rolling, and I heard
The voice again that I had heard before,
'Daughter, be of good cheer, for none are lost.'

V

"This dream to me the orphan mother old
Told on the morrow morn ; and for a while
She leant her head upon her hand, and wept.
Then, with a smile that, 'mid her trembling tears,
Rose like a resurrection of dead hope,
She spoke ; 'It will be even as I have said ;
Jove cast out ancient Saturn, and shall be
Cast out by one more mighty, who shall prove
The bearer, not the builder of our sorrows.
The nightly vision to my daily thoughts—
Such as the floodtide of my sorrow leaves
Traced on the naked sands of my despair—
Is answerable. O thou Comforter,
Immortal gladness is repluming in me
Its shatter'd wings ; the arrows of Apollo
Have slain my little ones, have beaten down
My earthly joys, but I shall see them yet !'
Thus saying she arose, and winding round

That royal form, majestical in age,
Her robes with comely beauty, as of old,
Went up into the city once again,
And spoke to the companions of her youth,
And those that she had known in days of pride.
Pale was her countenance, but most serene,
So that all wonder'd ; but when she had told
The secret of her comfort, and great hope,
The more they marvell'd ; they who deem'd her mad
Saw but in this the veering of the wind,
That blew the quenchless flame another way.
Right thro' the middle of the street she came,
Like one new-risen from a grave ; she pass'd
Straight onward, but her fix'd eyes saw not aught,
As tho' the visual orb, for nature made,
Changed for the inner supernatural eye,
Had lost its uses ; but when she awoke
Once more to sight and sound, and gazed around,
There came to her a little blue-eyed child
With golden hair, who, many a time and oft,
Had listen'd unreproved to the sad voice,
Broken with sighs and tears, the earnest prayer
Breathed up to heaven so often and in vain,
'Give me back one, oh ! give me only one !'
So that the child shed sympathetic tears
Altho' she knew not of them—for hush'd awe
To see the wan face buried in her hands,
And the long hair stream wildly o'er her knees,
Made the dear one forgetful of itself—

And now he came, that little blue-eyed child
With golden hair, and look'd up in her face—
The fearless wonder of a loving heart,
Where love a moment had forgotten fear.
She looking down beheld the boy, and cried,
'I thank thee, Heaven, I thank thee, gentle Heaven,'
And would have clasp'd him ; but he fled away
At sight of those drear eyes so worn with tears,
And in the breast of his own mother laid
His scared heart. That grief was worst of all ;
Down to the earth the childless widow fell,
And with a cry of desolation piled
The dust upon her head ; those that stood by,
Familiar with her long-enduring pains,
Fed, as it seem'd, by the avenging Gods,
Till she became a living fount of tears,
And knowing all good words to be in vain,
Left her with her old woe ; she spake no more.
No arrow from the quiver of Apollo
Came sharper than that sight of tenderness
Which had been hers, and was not ; bitter sounds
Of cursing would have fallen on her ear,
And daggers pointed to her wither'd breast
Had been more welcome ; death came to her thus,
Showing an infant in its mother's arms ;
Showing her love—the love that had been hers—
And, when her watchers followed her they found her
Lying where she had fallen, still and cold."

ÆSON

PART I

IT was the twilight of an Autumn day,
And I was wandering over wooded slopes,
That darken'd more the darkening grey above :
And silence seem'd the monarch of the place,
Broken by sighings, when the creeping wind
Bore up the wailings of the sea, and stirr'd
The shivering boughs to answer them, in sounds
Of mimic sorrow ; and my heedless feet
Sank thro' the tawny floor of fallen leaves
Of oak or pine, with sound, like waters chafed,
Or trampled on the sun-dried sprays, and cones
Startling the woodpecker ; and, from behind
Half-naked stems, like columns of old fanes
Roofless for ages, stilly golden bars
Lay all along the great shore of the West,
Like the sunk tide of some high main of fire,
That flow'd, all hush'd, amid its purple isles
Of scatter'd cloud. The whispers of the wind,
That every moment shed away the leaves,

Sometime the lovely, radiant crown of May,
In their fresh dewy green ; the close of day ;
The iron-grey clouds of the coming night
Of storm, bred thoughts within me, better hush'd
Than spoken ; such as come to mortal man,
When youth is gone, and the first downward steps
Are taken unto death. I pass'd my hand
Across my brows, now bare, where once there lay
The dark deep locks of prime, no longer dark,
But touch'd, like garden-flowers, with early snows,
While yet fond Autumn dreams of the sweet Summer ;
For yet he sees far off her flying feet
And rosy skirts. Deep down within my heart,
Unutterable weepings, ghostly pains,
Welter'd ; as 'twere through all the desert soul
Swept the drear winds of winter, in regrets,
In mournful memories, such as man alone
May feel and know. "O Heaven !" I cried at last,
" Shall man too die, whom thou hast crown'd with powers,
And o'er the manifold creation throned,
Most vital, and most multiform of all,
So that we know no more of the great Gods
Than is reveal'd to us thro' man, his form
And faculties, which made him ruler here
O'er beast, and bird, and over men themselves ?
The Understanding with its instruments
Taking the height and depth of visible things ;
The great Imagination, with its wings
Searching through All in sumless enterprises ;

The Fancy with its figures filling it,
And dazzling wonders ; and the Moral Soul
Unto all nature, superadding God,
Are Man's, his only ; so that he, who first
Is weaker than the weakest, grows the King
Of Nature, and her mighty strength he yokes
To his wing'd chariot ; and her monstrous shapes
Tremble before his fixed eye, and fall
Before his wondrous hand ; and none so fierce
And daring, but by knowledge he can tame,
Or fly from. And when all the outward world
Lies at his feet, like a strong giant, chain'd
By unseen links of adamant, he turns
Within himself, and builds another world
Of spirit-atoms, vaster than the old,
And, in the blazing furnace of his thought,
Melts down stray memories, fragments of the past,
Torn shreds of time, and moulds colossal shapes
Of wonder, so that ages stand to look
On one man's work, and marvel. Shall he die,
When ravens live an hundred years, and trees
Long as ten long-lived ravens, and the rocks,
And mountains live their own life, and are glad
With their own joy ? ” Oh then I had not dream'd
Of any life for man beyond this world ;
Tho' priest, and sage, and poet utter'd words
Mighty and mystic of a life to come,
Or veil'd in gorgeous symbol secret truths
Of solemn moment. When the sun was up,

The city sounding, and the day begun,
The dust and tumult of this working world
Dimm'd their great thoughts, and hush'd their holy words ;
And all the power and glory of such thoughts,
The Immortal, the Life to be,
Immortal youth, eternal knowledge, fled,
As stars before the great flood of the Sun,
Or mists before his fire. But now those thoughts,
Those awful thoughts rush'd on me all at once ;
As when at night, the great gates open thrown
Of an illumined palace, one goes down,
And standing on the threshold stares abroad
Into the deep, dread, voiceless, starless night,
And shouts, and draws no echoes from the dark.
So to my fearful cry no answer came,
As tho' the fatal Three, dread Sisterhood,
When they span, stretch'd, and shear'd the threads of Life,
To Man's vain sighings after the 'To come,'
To Man's three questionings—How? where? and when?
Gave back three separate, silent, solemn frowns.
Great sorrow shadow'd me. "O Gods!" I cried,
"Are all the days of man, so dower'd, fewer
Than are the swift thoughts of a single hour?
And, when the Soul hath gather'd all his strength,
Falls it like lightning, and is quench'd in darkness?"
Just at that moment, from the uprolling rack,
The lightning glanced, and shiver'd to its roots
An ancient pine that, crashing in its fall,
Bore down the trees beside it, and the winds

Flooded the gloomy alleys, and tore off
The remnant banners of the year. I fled,
With voices knelling at my heart. "The fate
Of all things earthly, bides its proper hour.
And, as the year dies, and the forest falls,
So cities crumble, and so nations craze.
Why weepest thou, as if thy lot were ill ?
Who, in a moment, knowest more than all
The generations from the dawn of Time,
Of birds and fishes, and four-footed beasts ;
So that thy life of threescore years and ten,
Measured by thoughts, is longer than the sum
Of all their added cycles, more than all
Millennial forests, than all sleepless seas,
Eternal floods, and clouds, exhaustless fires,
Or ev'n the quenchless stars that live for ever !
Is Death in Life a boon ? Oh ! wherefore linger,
After the harvest of the earth is reap'd,
And every fruit of use, and bloom of beauty
Is gather'd ? Wouldst thou tread a thousand years
The selfsame valley, till the weary eyes
Saw not its flowers and sunshine ; thy dull ears
Heard no bird's song, and all the morning air
Was wasted on a pulseless skeleton ?"
And so familiar grew my fearful thoughts,
They witch'd me to the love of them ; at last
I loved to rouse them up, altho' they stung me ;
So that I fled the court, the city shows,
And din of life ; and built me here a cot;

With a flower-garden fed by mountain rills,
Fresh from the snows ; and daily the aspect
Of the old crags, and mossy paths, and trees,
Deepen'd the unseen shadows in my heart,
That first swept o'er me on that Autumn day,
When first I wander'd thither years ago.

II

Then, even as one who, after travel, stands
Midway upon a hilltop, and looks down
Upon a desert on the other side
Sloping toward the silent barren sands .
Of the great sea, beyond whose gloomy rim
Are slowly shadowing up the stormy clouds
To burst at even ; I beheld, and groan'd,
The sorrow of the future. O Great Gods !
To be a bark, such as that traveller sees
Scudding before the waves and winds ; the helm
Crazing and loose, the ragged sail fresh-rent
With every blast of the dread coming night ;
That bark the last of all the fisher fleet,
That went forth in the dawn—for they are moor'd
In the home port, and fear not—shall I stay
To bale out the fierce waters momently,
Till strength and hope both fail me in the dark,
And the deep strangles my last feeble cry,
And horror ravens me ? And not leap forth,
And end it suddenly ? I sent a shout

Thro' the hush'd forest, and the brooding birds
Fled from their nests, and hidden creeping things,
I knew not of, moved from me, and fled in fear ;
And snakes writhed to their holes. They loved their
life,

Life worse than death to Man ; while I, a Man,
Monarch of all things, hated mine, and sought
To cut it short, altho' not half so long
As a young tree, and yet too long to be
Prisoner of pain and fear ! I hasten'd on,
With quicken'd steps ; for now the hope of death
Spurr'd all my sinews to a sudden life,
So that I laugh'd and mock'd, yet hurried on,
Till I stood by the dewy rivage green,
Where I had wander'd with Alcimeda,
The dawn of hope before us, on the morn
Of our betrothal, fairest of all Time,
And saw our image in the purple stream,
A perfect picture, true Love shrined in Youth.
And now I was alone, yet not alone ;
With all the very selfsame buds and flowers,
The silver call of woodbirds, and the ring
Of tinkling ripples at my feet ; the gush
Of blossom-stealing winds, and windblown sound
Of waters falling in the shade ; and all
Simple sweet voices, pleading to mine ear,
As though in tenderness they yearn'd to say,
“ Wilt thou, dear friend, forsake us all so soon,
Thou only who canst hear us, and delight ;

Out of whose soul we can draw melodies
In answer, and harmonious raptures full
Of that divinity of humanity,
Without which we were nothing, tho' we breathed
Our souls in music for ten thousand years ;
Without whose answers to our questionings,
The nobler songs we love more than our own,
We should grow faint, for lack of thy sweet tongue,
As these green woods without the summer sun ?”
I saw an unfledged birdlet from its nest
Drop in the thicket near ; I heard the wail
Of the poor mother bird, that flitted round
In narrowing circles, as though it would risk
All peril, so to pluck it from my hold.
I fed it from my hand with seeds ; I laid
The helpless outcast in its down again ;
And heard the happy mother chirp her joy,
In notes that were a blessing. And again
A little child came running thro’ the wood,
And weeping ; for what seem’d two fiery eyes
Glared on her from a brake ; she clasp’d my knees,
And I caught up the little frightened love,
And press’d her to my heart, and kiss’d her tears
Away, till she laugh’d on me ; and I laugh’d
To think what little straws could bar the door
Against my fatal purpose ; and I heard
The voice of my dead mother, when she said
In her old age, when moments were but cares,
“ Listen, my child, let no weak heart despair.

When the first odour-breath of love and youth
Was past, and joy seem'd but a wither'd leaf,
I cried, 'My life is empty ;' till I saw
I could do good. And only then I saw,
When I had sought and found some few to whom
Good might be done, so all mankind might be
Both givers and receivers, if they would.
So life came back ; let all who live, and will,
And know, and can, arise, and seek, and find !
Seek them who burn in daily fires of pain
Of racking limb, or writhing nerve ; who pray
For morn at even, and for even at morn ;
Whose life is breathing betwixt agonies
Of death in life ; them, haunted by some dread
They cannot flee from more than in a dream,
To which the daily burning fire of pain
Were enviable pastime ; them, who drowse
In numbing sorrow, like a pillar of ice
Circled with mist, through which the living forms
Of good and ill are seen as passing shades
Dim and impalpable ; where no tears are,
Such as sweet pity's wintry sunshine draws
From frozen orbs that nothing else can thaw :
Seek these, my child ; be not as those with eyes
Who cannot see. Oh ! what a mighty host
Is there, whose hearts, and heads, and hands
Are smit with palsy and they know it not :
Remember my words, be not like to them."
My steps grew slower as these words came back.

Still I sped onward, and my hope was still
To dare the death of them who have no hope.
And, as I ran, my purpose fix'd and fell ;
The wind rose softly and blew back my hair,
And o'er the dewy tops of the green trees
Wafted sweet gusts so ravishing, it seem'd
As tho' the earth had drawn in breath from heaven,
And kiss'd me with it. All things seem'd to weave
A charm about the last hour of my life,
So that I paused in wonder at the world
About me, as tho' now I first beheld
The youth and beauty of grey Time, and heard
The songs that fear and sorrow had shut out,
And mark'd the old, old sights for ever new.
So that mine eyes forgot to look below,
In search of the dark herb, whose deadly wine
Would bring that sleep, the anodyne of ill,
The eternal, sooner than mischance or age.
And, while I stood in that uncertain mood,
'Twixt anger, self-hate, and repining love,
'Twixt eager passion and oblivion,
Whispers of memory, clamours of despair,
There passed by one who doubled all my years,
The thing I feared to be, and so would die
Rather than brook it. On his staff he leant,
And his old limbs shook in the summer air.
I saw he was an hunger'd, as he look'd
On me with patient eyes and trembling lips,
But spake not. "Tell me all thy needs, old man,

Thy pains, and wrongs ; if thou art full of years,
I say thy sorrows cannot equal mine,
Though I be younger by a half of life."

He answer'd in such tones as were not sad,
Tho' meek, and without hope. "This day I laid
My last friend in the earth ; he was my dog,
Whose mute affection, and quick guardian eyes
Were all in all since their sweet voices ceased,
Who were my children : first the mother went,
And left me with them ; my one daughter next,
Fair image of her mother ; my sons died
Far from me in the wars, I know not where ;
And one, who was my friend, took from me all
I had stored up against my winter days,
To put it out to usury, and fled ;
Nothing I have, and nothing can I hope.
But this I feel, that somewhere there shall be
Knowledge of all that is not known, and sure
Just equipoise then for the ills of now.

My arms are feeble, and I cannot toil,
So that my little garden runs to waste,
And there are none to help me ; but I know
That, whatsoever be my weary lot,
I cannot cast the burthen ; for I came
To earth at bidding other than my own,
And may not quit this earth without the same."

He would have parted ; but I clutch'd his arm.
"What ! O just Gods," I cried, "and have ye sent,
In this lorn soul, your messenger to me,

Made of despised lips an oracle,
That I may learn first wisdom after him
A man, a king, a demigod to me,
And from his woes the vanity of mine,
And from his worth how base a thing I am ?
My neck is bow'd before a breath of air,
His shakes not, Atlantean under weight
Of mountain sorrows :" and I bad him hope,
And gave him cheer, and pray'd him follow me,
And in a little chamber nigh my own
I minister'd unto him, till he died
In some few days. "Would I had known thee first,"
I cried, "or one in patience such as thou,
Ere darkness filled the void of my vain days,
Peopled with phantoms ; can I flee them now ?"
But, for a while, my heart put armour on,
And for a little space was comforted,
For doubt and fear were hush'd for very shame.
The poor man taught me that one life is ours,
Not for our uses only ; and thenceforth,
Tho' the old griefs came back, I buried them
Deep in my soul ; my lamentations ceased ;
Or when they would break forth, I went abroad
And help'd some greater sorrow. So my hand
No more was raised against the hated self,
The poor mortality that daily waned.

III

Sometimes, in fond perversity, I loved
To picture to myself the impossible,
Like babes, that yearn for that they cannot reach,
And yearn the more the less they can attain.
And so I lull'd my daily growing fears,
By imaging fantastic opposites.
In a daydream sometimes I laugh'd and said,
“I live again, I live the days of old,
And now I have the purpose and the power
To fill them with a nobler life, and acts,
Such as the Sons of Gods, primeval Kings,
Wrought on the earth ; now will I live indeed.
All crooked winding ways that lead to death,
All sunny swamps that breathe malignant air,
I will eschew ; I will not pluck the flowers
Whose honey poisons ; I will climb the way
Whose steps are steadfast purposes of honour,
Nor swerve, if I should tread a wintry realm,
Sunless and cold.” I heard a mocking tongue
Hiss in mine ears : “What is it thou desirest ?
Is it not to relieve the past, to quaff
The wine of pleasure ; else why covet youth ?
Such youth would then be but a painted death.
Then listen, listen ; what if the pulsing blood,
What if the strength, and fierce impulse of youth,
Should drive thee on so hotly and so fast,
The speed should shut thine ears, and blind thine eyes

To all the past? would not the selfsame hours,
The selfsame mood, the selfsame circumstance
Repeated, make thee do again the deeds
Abhor'd? If not, what then?" A shrieking laugh
Answer'd itself, "Good cannot vanquish Ill,
Unless they meet together in one hour.
And if the old life, echoed in the new,
Should scare thee, and thy will should fold her wings,
The deed thou hast not doubled hath been done!
Not to have done it twice is all thy praise;
The deed once wrought can never be o'erthrown!"

IV

This day I follow'd to the place of tombs
My last dear kinswoman, the last fall'n leaf
Of the first generation. Though I stood
Midway in life, full man in heart and frame,
Needing no help but my own heart and hand,
I felt as tho' the fall of that old tree
Let in shrill winds upon me. I had known
A sweet instinctive bliss to hear myself
Call'd by the fond old names, familiar sounds
Endearing, which we hear when first our eyes
Turn sunward, but yet have no strength at all;
When others' strength and tender care must guide
Our feet and mould our tongues. Tho' wiser now
Than they, whose wisdom seem'd a godlike thing
To our first innocence.(and I could feel

A touch of sorrow not to think it still),
I loved to cherish the infantine faith
That help must come from them, protection, power,
A fond dream that of purpose shut out thought
So long as I could hear their voices breathe
The selfsame tones, and utter the old words.
But that sad morning was the last link snapt
That tied me to old years. I felt alone,
Alone, as one who, in a desert isle,
Sees the last plank of a great wreck go by,
And drift into the deep ; as one who hangs
O'er the dread brink of a sheer precipice,
And feels the hand, that held him up, relax,
And falls down, down into the deep dark sea !
When should I hear again the dear old words ?
Oh, nevermore ! or, if I did, the sound
Would be unlike, as some sweet pipe might be
With one stop only, to the harmony
Of many-voiced organs ; there are loves
Differing from one another, as the song
Of a full voice from one thin silver string,
Or the sun from a star. There is the child's,
Such as was mine, though it would come no more :
A man's, a maid's, a sister's, and a brother's.
But have they all the self-devoting might
Of that first love, the mother's for the child ?
Who would cast over me a guardian hand,
Now that the kind old folk are gone for aye,
The fond old women, tender souls and true ?

No, no ; the early notes were echoes now ;
 Self-love must hold me up in days to come,
 Not their divine affection. Oh ! how strong
 I felt before, ev'n to that day of death,
 In feeling that I bask'd in the full beams
 Of such affection ! Oh ! how feeble now,
 Standing alone in perfect liberty !
 I stood between the Future and the Past,
 A rock that takes the ebb-tide and the flood.
 It was the hour when shadows eastward turn,
 The solemn shadows of the failing sun.

V

Now that old age at last hath fallen on me,
 I cannot mock at it, as when a boy ;
 For boys are heartless in their sudden pride.
 And I remember me how once I met
 At dawn of day, a man of eighty years,
 Bow'd with his fleshly ills and load of care.
 I cried, "Good-morrow to thee, lovely youth !"
 Soon should I be ev'n as that scorned one.
 Nor could I, full of hope and power, contrast
 With the fair morning of my pleasant youth,
 Imagined sorrows of a time to be—
 The very light of such imaginings,
 Masking their deathcold shadows—or feel mirth
 As when I nicknamed some sick boy "old man,"
 Or some hoar head of sorrow, "a sweet youth."

Or, if my memory cheats me, and I lapse
To the fantastic humours of my prime,
Conscience breathes o'er me, like a chilly wind
Cast by the shadow of a wintry cloud
Across the sun ; and suddenly I know,
That some one, pictured in the present past,
Was of my years, or dead ; that 'twixt us roll'd
A flood of stormy decades, and the voice,
That sounded in mine ears a shout, a laugh,
Unto my waken'd judgment was no more
Than whisperings of the fallen leaves. Oh ! where
Should Hope take refuge ? and where shall she find
A fair white surface of the days to come,
Whereon to lay her colours ? And no more
Hath Fancy any vineyard of her own,
Or, like a beggar gleaning in the dark,
May only work when searching out in vain
Some bruised memory ; or with crazy step
Totters into the darkness of the night
Of the last ills ; and with her palsied hands
Throws round the pale abhorred skeletons
Some torn stray rags that have no warmth at all.

VI

And now first was the rustle of Time's wings
Heard in my heart, the inconstancy of Life
Made visible. Now first I felt my feet
Floating on waves that swept from under me,

With not a moment's point to call my own,
Ere it had vanish'd. Onward I was driven,
(Worse nightmare than what clings about the feet
Of one who flees from danger,) with a speed
I could not curb. An hour of mirthful talk ;
An evening charm'd with dances, and with songs ;
The enchantments of a sunny summermorn
With sweetness after showers ; joys scarce were sipp'd,
Ere they were snatch'd from me ; the memory of them
Scarce past by, seem'd already far away,
Like gardens, and gay pleasures we pass
On a wild horse ; scarce seen, ere rapt behind.
And, with the sense of mutability,
There came another sense ; my heart was fill'd
With avarice of joy, I hugg'd the hours,
I fondled the sweet moments with the greed
Of misers o'er their gold ; nought anger'd me
Like sudden hindrance, shadowing as a cloud
The gladness of the present ; lovingly
I listen'd words of love ; I drank the charm
Of virgin voices singing, and the mirth
Of children ; all beauty of the beautiful.
My thirst to drink of pleasure, while I could,
Grew quenchless, as the thirst of fever'd men
Who know that they must die, and every joy
I tinted, at the moment it was quaff'd,
With hues of phantasy, as one who holds
Old wine upon his tongue. I strove in thought
To multiply it, like to one who lifts

A wine-cup, and lets fall the sunny gold
Into the middle of the golden wine,
To glorify it. "Oh ! to-day, to-day,"
I cried, "for me, and let me live to-day,
As tho' no morrow could be anymore !
And if there be, will it be like to-day ?
For is not every day that comes to me
A paler twilight, lapsing into grey,
And utter blackness of eternal night ?
Wreathe me my cup with garlands, and bring in
The skeleton, and set it on a throne
Above the golden vessels ; let me pour
The last rare drops of life, and then come darkness
For ever and for ever ! let no thought,
Ev'n such a thought as that, draw forth a tear.
Let my heart dance ev'n if my limbs be slow.
Strike ye your harps, young minstrels, soothe me softly,
And silverly ; ye dark-eyed Mænads, come,
Let me hear laughter ringing ; let my day
Whose sun is setting, end without a cloud !"

VII

But most of all I laugh'd a bitter laugh,
To think of all the madness of the wise,
Who wake and watch when sundown bids them sleep.
And, rather than look on the lovely shapes,
That come from dreamland, sit by one dim lamp,
Or underneath the starlight, if, by toil,

And knowledge upon knowledge piled with pain,
Or fancy on fancy wrought with seeming ease—
But real toil, as delicate carved-work
Hung on a shrine—they may hereafter win
A laurel-crown which they can never wear,
A name of honour they can never hear,
Ev'n if the gather'd tongues of all this world,
Through all the future thundering in his ears,
Should raise his paean ! and so let the years,
When life is merry May and June, go by,
Like a bright river between rocky banks
That never feels the sun. “ Ha ! are ye mad
To die in youth that ye may—what ? not live
In after ages, more than the swift wave
Of that same river shall flow back again
For ever, and for ever ! and say not this,
That ye do thus because of other men
Who shall come after ; glory is your star,
And must be seen to be delighted in,
Not as a pale ghost glimmering in the gloom,
But as the noonday sun ! And could ye be
Contented with a sight of that pale thing,
Instead of the full sun ? Know, Death is night
Without a star ! without one little star !”

VIII

Ah ! then another mood got hold of me,
A desolate dark thought, and shook me so,

That all imaginations fled away
Before it, like the warm light of the west
Glanced o'er a flowery vale, before the cold
Shade of a dark cloud rushing from behind.
For where were they whose voices made me glad
In the old days? Yes, two or three were left.
They greeted me like shadows of the Past,
Their voices faint, their eyes more dim than mine ;
Their hearts, like mine, with little left to spare
Beyond the circle of their proper cares ;
Haply were more familiar with that thought
Of coming silence, which I fought against
With tears and sighs. Oh! where were they? That
thought

Sad memories answer'd, like a wailing, heard
At night from deep-sea waters ; they brought up
Moments long dead that now avenged themselves ;
Moments of strife and bitterness ; hard words
Flung in unkindness, and not yet unsaid ;
Of things done which should never have been done ;
Brotherly loves forgot. And if I knew,
That oftentimes since ill moods had been subdued
By gentle words ; those words of kindness now
Pierced my sad heart, more keen in tenderness,
Than if swift recompense had smit me then
And there with proud disdain. O careless Youth,
O reckless prime of days, that throwest down
The flowers just pluck'd, and tramplest underfoot !
Forget not ever, oh! no more forget,

There is no spectre half so terrible
As shadows of old wrongs ; heart-rending words
Lighten'd at one we loved ; of scorns that drew
Desolate tears ; slights dealt from our self-love.
For where those shadows are, no after-dawns
Of friendships ; no good deeds, nor mirth, nor songs,
Nor triumphs of delight, can blot them out.
Oh ! they instead lick up with their own shade
Things lovable and lovely. Oh ! one curse
Outweighs a thousand blessings, and one frown
Will gloom a long day's sunshine in the Past !

IX

And now, too often, like an icy wind,
A wintry fear breathed on me, telling me
That, as Hope feeds the heart in Spring with promise
Of coming Summer, and as Summer brings
To Hope her diadem of full-blown flowers,
And the last days of Autumn, without Hope,
Are clouded with the fear that every day
And hour, and moment, will shed off the leaves
From every fairest tree, and loveliest flower ;
So, in my mournful age, the wintry fear
Was this, that every welcome and farewell
Would be the last of all ; when one had come,
And parted, he would leave me, or I him,
For ever ; we sad souls would meet no more.
And oft I marvell'd to hear aged men,
Dreaming like boys how they should come and go,

As thus. “ Farewell, until we meet again
This time another year ; and I put forth
A fresh green leaf ;” or, “ I must haste away.
I hear the horse’s hoof, the chariot wheel.
But I will tell thee all another year,
When cobwebb’d flask of Samian is unseal’d,
The old Samian, mind, the old Samian ; and we sit
Beneath the trellised vine i’ the afternoon,
When our grandchildren in the orchard run.
The old Samian, mind, the old Samian ; now, farewell.’
Alas ! I never knew them meet again.
Yet was it better they should part with hope,
However faithless, than the certainty
That weigh’d down my own heart ? when I myself
Mutter’d their words, I mock’d myself and them.
Oh ! had their years been younger, they had heard,
Beneath the mimic music of my speech,
The deep bass of the desolate “ No more.”
Some said, “ Come to us in the vintage days,
When vats are overflowing with the must,
And country ditties o’er the valleys run,
Like rivulets in the sun, and rise to us,
Sitting in the cool shadow of the planes.”
Or one would say, unmindful of his years,
“ Oh ! leave this turmoil to another year,”
And to themselves, “ Another and another ; ”
With every last delay, as full of promise
To the grey head and heart of fourscore years,
As was the first ; as though he had not seen

But twenty summers. Better so, than shake
As I did with the fear of that “To come,”
And, thro’ the glories of the setting sun,
To see the stormcloud scowling underneath.
Farewell! which ever echoed in their hearts
Eternal welcome, was to me a mask
That hid despair! Yet, should I sink beneath
The load of mine own sorrow, and not seek
To fling it off with all my might? not quaff
Last drops of pleasure with a quenchless thirst?
Last grapes on the last bunch of the old vine?
Should I not drink again into mine ears
The songs that were the dearest to my youth?
Nor sip the old wine hidden from all eyes
These fifty years, as though it were the growth
Of yesterday? and feel the golden dews
Feed my old heart with memories of hopes?
Should I not live again, beneath the charm
Of the wine’s short-lived summer in the blood,
The stars and roses of young happy faces
Round me—the days of old, the days of youth?
Forget, forget, forget, what I am now,
And hear, in the sweet silvery, ringing laugh,
And chainless merriment of some dear child,
My own voice at his age? and thus once more
Blossom into the image of those hours,
Until the icicles about my heart
Melted in the suncolour’s matin play,
Once more to childish tears of tenderness?

X

From year to year, oft as the autumn fell,
And the green woods were changed, the selfsame
thoughts

Were born within me, still with deepening gloom.
And now I stood upon the utter edge
Of the great precipice. No leaf of youth
Hung on the sad old tree ; but some white hairs,
Like the eternal snows. And, as I stood
Sounding the same heart music, as of old,
The same dread anthem of despair and fear,
That seem'd still sadder on the broken strings,
I heard a sweet voice down the woodland walks,
Clear as a sunbeam. In that voice was all
The glory of youth ; and fell upon mine ear
With vital affluences of delight,
Like matin fragrance blown thro' wildrose briers
Against the brows of dreamers in affright,
Waking ere sunrise ; and a sense of joy
Sprang up a moment in me and no more,
But such a moment for full half a life
I had not known. O blessed thrills of youth !
So sweet it left its pulse the livelong day.
Nearer and nearer flow'd the blissful song,
And now I saw it was my son's young wife,
The broadbrow'd daughter of the Thracian King,
Wisest of mortal women ; and I stood
Bow'd on my staff, to see that vision bright.

Radiant she stept upon the sunlit path,
And young anemones. Ere I could cry,
“Welcome,” she ran, and took me by the robe.
“O father, know’st thou not, this very morn
The city rings with pæans, and the walls
Are throng’d with eyes ; and shouts and beaten palms,
And fresh white roses rain’d from virgin hands,
Attend the conqueror to the temple gates,
Where all the air is dim with breath of flowers
And smoke of urns of odours ? I am come
To lead thee to the triumph of thy son,
Mine own beloved one. Come, even now
The altars hold their offerings ; aged sires
And mothers, dropping happy tears, are by,
For the great ship is anchor’d by the mole.
Our mighty men of valour, safe on shore,
Send up a grateful utterance to the Gods,
For their glad fortune ; and the first of men
Hears his proud name, borne on from tongue to tongue,
Without a pause, like thunder in the hills.”
She ceased. “Alas !” I cried, in feeble tones,
Like childhood ; “can these limbs, that scarce may creep
A little forth at noonday in the sun ;
These ears that faintly take thy words, my child ;
These eyes that dimly catch the far-off flash
Of yonder tumbling torrent ; (which I loved
To hark in days of old, when all the world
Of outward nature was a pictured answer
To the great thoughts within me) ; can this heart

Move to fresh notes of glory ? Now, oh, now,
When other life than memory have I none,
When to look forward is to see the gloom
Of mere oblivion, as a lampless cave,
Where silence is so deep, that all the tongues
Of all men calling to me, near as thou,
Would never move me more. A few more days,
And this sad heart, that was the throne of love,
Glory, ambition, all that stirs my son,
Shall be thrown by, like to an outburnt slag.
Think ye, I am a subject for delight,
For summer pageants, happy songs and flowers ?
If I must see ought, let it be my tomb,
And daily sitting there, by daily use
Conform me to the sorrow and the shade ;
While yet I live, seem as tho' dead ; and feel
No pang at parting when the last farewell
Waves to me from the hills, and golden clouds,
And rolling waters. Pardon me these thoughts,
Which are not those of other men, I know.
But, since the days when life began to wane,
My fears have wax'd with anguish at the thought,
That life is but a dream, while the fair world
Of Nature clothes herself in fresh green youth
From year to year. Oh better be a tree,
A rock o'er-grown with wildrose, or a spring,
Whose voice gives utterance to no subtle thoughts,
A rushing river that goes by for ever ;
While Life once fled by, never more returns ;

Than think, and think, and for the sum of thoughts,
Find that thought only is a spring of sorrow ! ”

XI

The lovely Princess listen'd to the words
Of the old man, and with a loving smile.
“ Last night,” she said, “ I dreamt a pleasant dream.
I walk'd amid the withering flowers, and trees,
Whose leaves were shed, all but one aged oak,
And its last plumes were falling silently.
Methought my step shook off the few fair petals
Of the last rose, how light soe'er I trod ;
So that I stay'd my foot beneath the shade
Of that old oak, and stretching forth my hand—
I seem'd to say : ‘ If I could have my will,
Thy sere leaves, only remnant of the Past,
Sweet Summer, should be changed to April green.’
And, as I spoke, I touch'd the knarry trunk
With this weak hand and straightway buds appear'd,
And little leaves unfolding, till the whole,
With low sounds as of subtle music, robed
Itself in its first beauty ; and I woke
In wonder at the spirit of that dream.
What if thou art that oak, and mine the hand
To make thee spring again ? Farewell, my father.
Breathe in new hopes, for by to-morrow morn
I hope an answer to my prayer this night,
Showing me many things ! ”

And then she fled.

For from the city rose the festal sounds
And shouts uprolling, like a breezy sea
On a rough shore. "Oh can it be," I said,
"That by the force of will, or skill of art,
Or subtle essences of plants and flowers,
Or even by the free will of the Gods,
Death can be stay'd? If Nature makes, and Time
Unmakes us, Nature may remake us still,
Could we but snatch the inmost germ of life
Whence, as a flame from one expanding spark,
All outward forms unfold. It may be so.
Shall the green herb, that shrinks, grow green again
With each new spring? and flowers have life, as long
As man who is a spirit? shall the sun,
That swooneth in the winter, put on strength
And give it unto all things every year?
Shall streams, that feed the mountain pastures, dance
With joyance to the light and songs of May?
Shall Mother Earth have everlasting Life,
And we her children have no power to rise
Again when we are fallen? Alas! the Gods
Brook not that Man should live to be their like;
Else had they shown to us in dream, or vision,
Or thro' their oracles deliver'd us
This secret."

Then I smiled, to mark her run
Light as a wood-nymph, and again to think
How the fresh blood of youth can make of things,

Impossible to reason, truths as strong
As their wild thoughts to dreamers. Such is youth,
That what it loves it sees, and knows no stay
More than a man who lieth in his sleep.

XII

One day, the Princess came to me in haste.
Her eyes were starbright, and her cheeks were flush'd
With bloom of some great joy. She knelt beside me,
And she said fondly : "Father dear, my dreams
Are coming true ; there is no death for thee,
Perchance, no more for any man ; who knows ?
I have had speech of Jason, and his words
Were wonderful ; he told me many things,
And mighty, such as few have ever dream'd."
And, as she spake, her chariot drew nigh
To bear her to the city. "Come with me,"
She said, "and hear the voice of thine own son
Confirm the great things I shall tell thee now,
Seated beside me while the horses run.
This land of Hellas, glorious though it be,
Father, is but the youngest-born of Time.
But in the mystic Orient survive
The heirs of the primeval men, possessed
Of magic knowledge hid from all the world.
Marvellous fruits, and gums, and charmed roots,
Better than all the wealth of all this world,
That make men Gods. 'An aged man,' he said,

'Met me at Colchis, by the shore o' the sea,
A man of many winters. In my tongue
He spake to me ; for he had wander'd far
To East and West, and dwelt in many lands ;
Egypt and Persia, and far India seen ;
Talk'd with the wise old priests of other Gods ;
And taken gifts, and from white-bearded men
Learnt subtlest spells. 'And once I spoke with one,'
The traveller said. "'Twas by an odorous lamp,
In solitary chamber, far within
A Brahma temple, at midnight, we sat,
Discoursing Fate, Time, and Eternity,
Sorrows of this world, flashes of the next,
Vain hopes and vain regrets. 'Hark,' said the Priest ;
'I have been young, who now am old, with thoughts
Far other than my present. I remember
The rapture of unfolding love, the sweetness
Of early hopes ; ambitions that have fallen,
And pleasures that have fail'd. Ah me ! sometimes
Unutterable yearnings for the Past,
And vain desires to kindle it anew,
Laid hold of me. I sigh'd, and secret tears
Sprang from mine eyes ; my melancholy moods
Led me to lonely places, and I met
Strange men, and poor and friendless. And one day
A dervish said to me, (he was a man
Tall, and with that deep eye, and regal brow,
That mark'd him born one of the Sacred Race,
By birthright bard and seer) : 'The rich are poor,

The wise are fools ; I plod not, I, nor toil,
I wander where I will ; I have no fears.
But hark ! I have the secret of all power,
And knowledge, of Eternity, and Time,
Unfailing blisses, and immortal youth.
What matters it, if I am old and weak,
My raiment ragged ? what if I have not
Thy wisdom reap'd from every antique scroll,
And not one precious coin to cross my hand ?
Still can I be all that I will ; and Time,
In one brief moment, is Eternity ;
One span unrolls into Infinitude.
And, if I wander in a wilderness,
It blossoms with rose gardens, and is set
With kingly palaces of gold and gems.
And, if I set my heart to dream of Youth,
I meet fair troops of laughing girls, who dance,
And clash the cymbals, set the air on fire
With thrilling songs, and I too dance and sing ;
My aged feet are wing'd, my mirth unchain'd,
My strength renew'd : and, if ambition stirs
My soul, and thoughts of glory lift me up,
Lo ! I am seated in a gilded car,
And cloth of gold and purple, fit for kings,
Apparels me ; the trumpets sound before me,
Legions proclaim my triumph ; festal hymns,
And flowers, and shouts of victory, follow me ;
Vast plains are shadow'd by Titanic hosts,
And helm, and lance, and shield give back the sun ;

My name is thunder'd into distant vales,
And to the mountain peaks, and frozen snows !
Onward we march and onward, with the tread
Of giants, and with songs, as sound of seas !'
Whereat he reach'd, from out a niche hard by,
A cup and vial, and with trembling hand
Pour'd out some drops, that in the setting sun
Shone, like those dews that, 'mid the forest leaves
Take their green hue, or as the radiant sheen
Of molten emerald ; and he quaff'd in haste
That mystic rain. I mark'd him as he lay,
Muttering to himself, until at length
He sank to moveless slumber, and I watch'd
Hour after hour until the dawn of day.
And, as the sun was leaping o'er the hills,
Up started he from silence with a shout,
That made me deem him phrenzied. 'Lo !' he cried,

XIII

'I am Great Brouma from the rising sun,
World-conqueror and king ; I come ! I come !
Rejoice, thou Summer, and rejoice, O friends,
With whom this morn I set forth on my way,
To win the World. And from the mountain-tops,
And from the heart of the abundant vales,
Let one great voice go up, one voice of song,
And exultation ! for this morn I mount
My chariot drawn by lions, here at hand,

Not such as tear men in their hungry rage,
But such as bend their necks, and give their strength
To noble uses, even as the will,
That moves me now to do all kindly deeds.

O sweet Morn in the mountains, clothed with wealth
Of many-colour'd light, and teeming growth
Of red and golden vintage ! Oh I feel
The soft, enamour'd, odour-laden breath
Of sweet winds, from the unseen thickets sighing,
Down in the covert dingles, and green glens,
Where woodbines, link'd with jasmin and wildrose,
Fill all the brooding sunshine with delight,
And mingled fragrances ; and other airs,
Leaping the slant sides of the mountains, bring
The spirits of wild thyme and heatherbells.

I hear the noise of dashing waters, sway'd
To and fro by the wavering wind ; I catch
The flash of the fierce torrent, as it flies
From far above me unto far below,
And hides itself among the crazed rocks,
And sunless gulfs, bathing the sunbrown turf
With such a vital freshness, that the Spring
Laughs out once more. Upon the mountain-peaks
The golden clouds hold back, and stay their course,
Like fiery horses, by their charioteers
Curb'd in, that they may have a perfect sight
Of the full pomp of this high festival !

Oh ! Heaven and Earth are in full concord now ;
For I go forth to Victory, to win,

Not with sharp sword and spear, but with the power
Of a new life, that shall embrace the world,
As these green leaves twine round the naked stem
I hold. For I go forth, to make of man
The Lord of Nature, to ennable him,
And make him more a king, a thousandfold,
Than they, who ride from battle splash'd with blood,
And laden with the spoil of other kings ;
And he sings blithely, and his children dance
Beneath the broad leaves of the jocund vine !
The unborn generations shall look back
To this great Morn, as to the first sunrise,
And everlasting melodies shall roll
The glory of it down the expanding streams
Of Ages, and the voices of to-day
Shall echo through all Æons, till the end !
Hark ! do I hear the manifold acclaim
Of the great army of my friends ? A shout
Of gather'd thousands, as they flood this way ?
And village boys that come on hand in hand
With laughing girls ? Thrice happy country-folk !
Innumerable they come, winding beneath
The sloping woodlands, and grey rocks, and snatch
The acorn and the chestnut as they pass,
And the wildberry from the brier, and stain
Their lips with it, unknowing that I bring
The godlike seed, that shall transform the earth
Into a blissful garden, out of which
They shall draw streams, to make the heart of man

Forgetful of his sorrows, and his eye
Radiant with summer, and his fertile brain
A treasure-house of phantasies for aye !
See, how far off the many-colour'd robes
Of the great multitude, in passing, glow,
And flame out in the sunlight ; and again
Are drown'd in the green gloom of oaken glade
And beechen hollow ; how they wind in light
And shadow, and, as some vast serpent, twine,
Like fire and smoke, creeping along the ground,
Or some great river, which a rainbow paints
With its own glories. Wait, my lions, wait
Their coming ; hasten not until they join.
For altogether shall we stream along
Over the hills and vales, from morn till even.
No weariness shall overtake our joy ;
For we are bent to overcome by Good
The ancient Ills, and the waste places turn
To happy gardens, and the hungry bones
Of poverty to clothe and warm with life,
New life, abundance, strength, prosperity !
Shall not the hope of the true love of all
Mankind raise up the weary heart, like wings
Above the earth ? Where is the place for pain
Or sorrow ? They are hush'd, as is the owl
After the sunrise, banish'd to the dens
Where no light enters ; as the ghastly leaves,
That in the darkness of the woods grow pale ;
For them no sunbeam kisses : and he shriek'd
'Evoe ! Evoe ! Evoe !'

XIV

‘ Here he ceased,
And fell, as though a bolt had stricken him
Prone to the earth. I saw that he was dead.
The life, with this last madness, had burnt out,
Long worn with hunger and with wanderings.
I trembled ; was it that the life had thus
Snapt, like a spring o'er-strained, or did that cup
Hold fatal syrup ? In his rocky cell
I buried him, and fled, but not without
The magic vial hidden in my vest.
And since that day, remembering the strange height
Of rapture, that the wonder-working dew
Had raised him to, that poor and hungry man,
Oft was I tempted in the dead of night,
When striving with the pale ghosts of old years,
And voices, and sad thoughts that harrow'd sleep,
To test upon myself what I had seen ;
Make man into a God ! Ofttimes my hand
Stretch'd forth to clutch the mighty wine ; and still
A holy awe, mix'd with a natural dread,
Forbad me, and I withdrew the daring hand.
And now, so many years are fled away,
Since the first burning thirst for secret things
Is quench'd within me, that I fear no more
Its presence near me. Oh am I not a priest,
A minister to Chrishna the divine ?
Vow'd to self-rule, self-agony, self-death ;

To afflict the body for the spirit's sake ;
To suffer all things hateful, heat and cold,
Hunger and thirst ? The loves that others live for,
Have I not all forsborn, and every bliss,
Tasted by common men, trod down, and scorn'd,
For sake of that high place that is for me
Prepared in highest heaven, a crown, a throne,
And everlasting empire over those
I envy now ? No, no ! 'tis finish'd now.
And, that I may not wander from the right,
(Though, as I said, I fear not, no, I fear not),
And in some evil moment do the thing
In Time, which would kill all Eternity,
And snatch from me for ever and for ever
Glory, and gladness, and supremacy,
Take thou the magic vial, take it, friend,
Hide it henceforward from me ; thou mayst live
For time, and use it for high purposes,
And may great Brahma bless thee in its use.'
And then a silver casket he unlock'd,
And took from it the vial, which I bore
Away with me. But still, as with the priest,
Awe weigh'd upon my heart, and natural fear,
Lest the same doom, that struck the dervish dead,
Should seize upon me if I drank of it.
And I too, I, that I may not be won
In evil moment, hand it over to thee,
According to thine earnest prayer, lest I
Sometime should pour it out into the air,

O Jason ! But, I charge thee, use it not,
Unless it shall be found that some sore ill
Befalling man, some lamentable pain,
That laughs at all else, may be charm'd by it.
For thus dread things are made to minister,
As 'twere in mockery, when good things have fail'd,
And save the life that else they would consume.'

'Thus spake to me that wanderer to the East ;
And what he counsell'd me, I counsel thee,
Beloved ; oh ! I charge thee, use it not,'

Said Jason. Then I said, 'I have no fear.
And I perceive that mighty men of war,
Who would stand proudly, one man against ten,
Fearless of death, or pain, or any ill
Without them, oftentimes shudder at a thought,
That is not all as clear as the great sun
At noonday, or as round as their own shields,
And shrink from the Unseen. So might a child
Take, for a snake, the shadow of a bough
Laden with goodly fruitage ; I will pluck
That fruitage, mindless of the shadows under.'

And so he gave it me. I tell thee, father,
I had no fear ; but in my heart there grew,
While musing on this essence marvellous,
A strange desire, a fever-thirst, a passion,
To visit that far clime, that very realm
Where growths like that were ev'n familiar things.
Were men as Gods there ? Were the women wise,
As beautiful ? Were infants of that land

Able to counsel old men of our own ?
Were cities built of diamond ? Were the builders
Giants and Titans ? Did the golden flowers
Breathe strength into the spirit thro' the sense ?
And the rare fruits, instinct with life, distil
The nectars of the Immortals, growing Youth
And length of days ? And were the earth and sky
Radiant with the selfsame sun and stars ;
The mountains and the valleys as our own
Or dropt from Heaven itself ? The while I mused
On all these things, I stretch'd my hand, and took
The vial, and I rain'd upon my tongue
Three emerald drops, and to my chamber fled,
And slept, how long I know not. But I woke
Suddenly in a glory of such light,
As never bathed the world till then ; and all
I had imagined and desired was there.
The solid marbles of the chamber grew
Translucent, and the ceiling parted, showing
The blazing day ; and lo ! a car above,
Of golden flame, and, yoked thereto, I saw
Untameable wild creatures, winged, strong,
And magically swift to speed me on
From land to land ; I mounted in glad haste.
We rose until the earth beneath me lay,
Like a great picture, framed in azure lights,
And wreathen cloud ; the mountain-tops went down,
And rolling rivers seem'd as little rills ;
And multitudinous voices seem'd to quire

Above, beneath, around me, hymning all
The glory of Ind. Methought I join'd the weird,
Oceanic song ; immeasurable Space,
Out of its hollow vastness, answer'd me
With sumless echoes, awful undulations,
And endless, making music manifold,
And sweet, as dying thunders, or the fall
Of world-wide torrents into the Abyss ;
Until we poised, in silver ether swaying,
Over that far, that ancient land—”

XV

Her voice,
Like melody in mine ear, had smit my soul
With such deep wonder, that I strain'd my sense
To catch each lightest syllable. But soon
I ceased to hear that silver tongue, and ear
And eye both fail'd, and then I knew no more ;
Whether it were that exultation wrought
Too fiercely in my aged frame ; or glare
And dust of the great city, and the sound
Of many chariots, and the shouts of men ;
Or all together, like a full floodtide,
Rush'd o'er me ; or that now the hour had come
When I must go to Death, not come to Life,
And 'twas too late, too late ! O dreadful thought !
Too dreadful ! So I fell into a swoon.
And when I woke, lo, pitying eyes were there ;

Kind hands had placed me in a silver bath,
That seem'd a large and lovely-fashion'd shell,
In summer moonlight, wafted o'er calm seas,
Fragrant with essences of richest flowers,
And rarest herbs ; and then I knew I lay
In Jason's palace. All around me shone
What I had never dreamt, and now first saw,
The glory of my son ; the riches brought
Out of the Orient, and the gifts bestow'd
By the proud citizens upon the man,
Who had done deeds no other men had done ;
Saw gold, and gems, and marbles, that inlaid
The stately, carven chamber, whose high dome
Was pictured with wing'd shapes, and scrolled flowers,
And little fluttering shapes of flying Loves,
That shot down arrows, hidden in roseleaves,
Into the hearts of the scared nymphs, and laugh'd
At their blue-eyed dismay. O'er mountain-peaks
The blazing wheels, and many-trampling hoofs,
Of the great steeds of Eos onward came,
Back'd by the glory of the unrisen sun,
'Twixt many-volumed clouds of gold and rose ;
And through an opening in the marble dome
The deep, still purple ether shone divine.
From sculptured urns of agate there arose
Rich smoke of burning odours, that half veil'd,
And half revealed, the lovely pictured roof.
And when the fumes of fragrance had exhaled,
Passing up to the open air, I saw

What their sweet clouds had hidden from my sight ;
How milkwhite statues, shaped by cunning hand,
Stood in each angle, bearing on their heads
Baskets of breathing violets, or red rose,
Or tall-neckt lilies, fed with dewy drops
Of tiniest rillets, gushing from the walls
With a low, tinkling chime that flatter'd sleep.
But was I there to drowse, as a sick girl
Fantastically musing ? Was I there
To dream, to sleep, perchance to die ? 'Twas Life
That I had sought, and she had promised me ;
Where was the blest elixir ? As I turn'd
Around me, half in anger, half despair,
Ah ! there, there, the weird vial nigh me stood
Upon a golden tripod ! "Alala !"
I cried, like those who rush upon the foe,
"Death, thou art vanquish'd ! Victory ! Victory !
The Gods have told their secret ; I shall live
For ever ; shall the everlasting oak
Mock me with its endurance ? Shall a rose,
Burnish'd afresh each spring with perfect grace,
Laugh in my face ? and the green herb arise
Out of its grave anew, and I a man,
Once fallen, be no more, as tho' the Gods
Fear'd their own earthly image, and refuse
The boon they know to be the best of all ?
And, if I die in dreaming, I shall live.
Were it not better thus to pass away,
Hopeful, exulting, into hopeless Night,

Than linger thro' regrets and fears—the shadows
That, in this twilight of my utter years,
Shape themselves horribly, and are more dread
Than very dark of Doom?" I was resolved.
I took the vial in my trembling hand
At last, with beating heart, 'twixt hope and fear,
And saw the green drops fall into the cup,
Like emeralds sparkling in the even-light,
And drank athirst for Immortality,
And threw myself upon my bed, and slept.

PART II

I

"Victory!" I cried, awaking, "Victory!"
And from the walls a thousand echoes sprang,
Like welcomes to me. Was it mine, this frame,
Strong as a wrestler's, nimble as a child's?
Mine these dark ringlets dancing on my neck;
Mine this blithe heart that bears me up like wings?
Some hand had near me laid fresh-gather'd flowers,
And the bright-colour'd raiment, fit for youth,
Folded beside me: 'twas the early dawn,
When the pale glory, like a flood tide, drowns
The orient, waxing momently. I ran
Along the vacant streets, and still crossways,
Till I had found the first green hill, beyond
The city gates, and saw the sun come up,

And felt the young wind play with my deep hair.
How shall I ever paint the glad spring-morn,
And those first pulses of exulting youth,
Renew'd like morn? not, as in the first years,
Vibrating unregarded in the heart,
First instincts drank in like the morning air,
And sunlight, after dreamless sleep—a state
Unnoted, and with nothing to compare
Except itself—but as it were a picture
Dim with the dust of years, and once again
Made visible, with all its forms, and hues,
In all their primal freshness. As it were
A deathcold image of pale Memory
Incarnated, and fill'd with thought, and stirr'd
With motion, stepping from its pedestal
Into the living world; a wither'd rose
Expanded into vernal bloom once more;
A frozen fountain leaping into light.
The resurrection, sweeter than the birth,
Found images and echoes of itself
In all things round about me; Nature now
Mock'd me no more, but answer'd to my joy!
A sumless wonder had been work'd; I knew
I had come up to that which I desired.
The breeze of morn, the glory of the May;
The wrinkled stems, that put on crowns of Youth;
The upland slopes, that zone themselves with flowers,
Like many-colour'd fire; the trembling leaves,
That clothed the ancient giants of the woods,

Rustling with dewy twinklings, and as young
As since a thousand years ; and the glad quire
Of busy birds, that swam the sunny streams
That gush'd thro' the green glooms, and mix'd their songs
In one great choral pæan ; the fresh brooks
Flashing like quenchless lightnings from the steeps,
And plunging thro' dust valleys, yet not hid
From the all-seeing sun that sought them out,
And kiss'd them as they fled with stars of gold ;
All things were happy, all. They spoke of Life,
Youth, joy ; I also, I was blest as they.
I who had yearn'd, for half a hundred years,
For this great day, now felt again the bliss
Of the first times, beneath the selfsame sky,
In the same fragrant wood-walks, the same hour ;
And, to the ecstasy of present joy,
The memory of first feelings join'd itself,
Like rainbow beyond rainbow. Oh ! I laugh'd,
I sang, I shouted, till the very birds
Were hush'd ; I could not weary of delight ;
I open'd all my senses to the morn,
I drown'd in draughts of light, and air ; I ran,
And danced along the rivulet's daisied brink,
And with the dancing waters ; and I leap'd,
And tried the feats of strength I wrought of old ;
Coursed up the mountain's side without a breath ;
Scaled the rough crags for berries and for birds ;
And sought out perils but to vanquish them ;
Dropt o'er great rocks, and raised myself again

With mighty arms, as tho' this youth restored,
Could never more be mortal. Then I paused
To hark to my strong pulses, as they beat,
And proud with godlike triumph ; and, stooping down,
With a boy's sudden thirst that must be quench'd,
To catch the clear cold water in my hand,
And bending o'er the brook, I saw myself
Mirror'd with long, dark locks, and star-bright eyes,
And cheeks like April roses. Oh ! I cried,
'Tis better than all Fancy, and 'tis true !

II

Alcimeda, bow'd down by ills of age,
Went forth no more, or leant upon my strength,
Now strength no more ; but she, poor soul, held fast
Her faith in my protecting arm, and smiled,
Ev'n as a last beam of the setting sun
In winter. But this day she pass'd not forth,
For the sky lower'd, and sharp winds from the snow
Made the blood shiver. In the inner room
She sat, her white head bow'd upon her hands :
And, as I softly towards the portal came,
Laughing unto myself (O fool ! oh fill'd
With emptiness, if to thine inner sense
No wiser thoughts could flow than such as once
Possess'd thee, when our hearts, as well as brows,
Were full of youth and hope !), she raised her head
From under sheltering palms ; she turn'd her eyes

Upon me, and she said with trembling lips ;
“ It is a dream, but oh so like the truth
Of sixty years agone. Do the mind’s eyes
See visions born within us, while the outward
Is daily waxing fainter and more faint ?
Or sure I saw the boy, so dearly loved
In youth ; but were it true, ’twere vain, for I
Have fill’d my heart with dust of this world’s ills,
And now the broken cistern would not hold
The dancing waters of delight again ;
They would run thro’ the chinks by sorrow made,
And bitter with the tears that lie therein.”
“ Alcimeda,” I murmur’d, “ it is I.
The Enchantress hath given back to me my youth,
And strength ; and so rejoice with me, rejoice,
Dear heart.” A cry ! she answer’d with a cry,
And from her seat she cast herself in grief
And fear. “ Ye Gods, he hath forsaken me !
Æson, thou hast forsaken her, whose heart
Hath beat with thine for half a hundred years.
They laugh, who have done this, I know they laugh,
And I must weep ; but if the Enchantress now
Had made me young as thou art, I would pray
For my grey years once more, that look for death
More than for more of life, as a tired child
Leans on his cradle with his half-shut eyes.
Oh ! well I know that cunning worker means
No good to me, by cheating me of that
I love now better in thee than dark locks,

And glittering eyes, or any bloom of youth ;
Memories, that bring unutter'd sympathies ;
Hopes, that look on together to the fair
Elysian fields ; a mutual sigh, a tear
That times a tear, and then they fall together
O'er some sweet past, brought up once more in talk
Beneath the vine, when the hot hours are o'er,
Or in the moonlight silence. Look on me !
Say, was not I thy wife ? Behold thy mother !
Thy daughter's self is fitter for thy mother,
Her daughter for thy mate, than I am now ;
Her youth more faded than that form I see
Before me, radiant as in days of prime.
Canst thou rejoice with me, or I with thee ?
Can I feel sympathy with thine old age,
Thus mask'd in brightest youth ? can boyish blood
Quivering with life, feel sympathy with hers,
That creeps like rilles lost among dry sands ?
Canst thou approach me with a lover's looks,
And I receive thee with these half-blind orbs ?
Can the smooth hand lie in the wither'd palm,
Unless they be a mother's and her child's ?
Wrinkles kiss roses, the midsummer morn
Welcome the snowflake, the midwinter frost
Leap to the laughing June ?" She spake no more,
Save this—"O Æson, Æson, my first love !
My thoughts had been—my hope, this many a day—
That we two, match'd in years, whose hearts were one
In gladness and in sorrow, should be join'd,

Where most are parted, in the day of doom.
That we two, hand in hand upon the shore
Of the dark river, should await the bark,
And the dusk ferryman, to waft us o'er,
Where troubled souls are comforted with calm,
And weary hearts with memories of sweet hours,
Balmy as sleep with summer dreams. But thou
Hast shiver'd all the tablet of my hopes
And broke this heart—that haply else had stood
A few more winters with thee, and blind eyes,
Ev'n with blind eyes, for such will be my lot—
As 'twere a vessel whence the wine is drain'd,
Heirloom of ages, suddenly thrown down,
And shatter'd by unpitying hand ; this heart
Weak, and now void of all but those few drops,
That lived on dear imaginations, born
Of dearer memories. And it seems to me,"
(And here two tears ran over those old eyes
As springs, dried up for long long years, again
Gush forth in earthquakes), "I shall better love
To wander o'er the dim shore all alone,
Than pass across, where I might find a home,
Another home, but farther off from thee."
Ah ! then I wept ; had sorrow come so soon ?
Or were they dews of dawn, these gushing drops ?
But I went forth, to seek one who had power
To give new life, as she had given to me,
Nought doubting, nor, that those dear aged eyes
Should shed no more of such heart-breaking tears,

But be the faithful mirror of my own,
Taking my joy on their delighted orbs
Like sunshine on the waters ; and I pass'd
As 'twere with wings, so eager was my hope.
But had I dreamt the grief that was to come,
My hope had been less instant than my fear !

III

Alas ! not long did the great light of bliss
Shine on me, when the fiery pulse was calm,
The senses drowsy, and return of thought
Brought back my memories, and the knowledges
Gather'd thro' years of change—the memories
Of friends who had grown up with me, were young
When I was young, and old when I was old.
How sad it was sometimes to meet the son,
And take him for the father, whom I knew,
In first old age with me, his friend ; to see
The thin grey hair, the palsied step ; and hear
The well-known voice again, for so it seem'd ;
And, if I call'd him by his name, to meet
Strange looks of cold disdain, and loveless words.
Then fear possess'd me, and a new desire.
Could I not shake off, with the aged frame,
The experienced mind ? and once again put on
Boyhood's simplicity, and eager will ?
For, though at first the marvellous rebirth
Of all that I had yearn'd for came most sweet,

And doubly sweet from my self-consciousness,
Soon came the bitter knowledge after it
That this fair resurrection of the Past
Was all unsuited to the timeworn soul,
That dwelt within it. What were lively limbs
Without the love that moved them? Could I think
With youthful thoughts, because my blood was warm?
Clothe myself with new hope and nought to hope for?
True, I might seek the revel, join the dance,
And quaff the winecup; with a keener sense
Listen to sweet music, and breathe in
The odours of spring flowers, and mark their hues
With undimm'd eyes; but what had I to hope,
Whom sad experience had taught to know
The vanity of all things, and the blight
That kills the blossom ere the fruit is set?
True, I might join the sports of the young men,
Whose very souls were one with their delights.
Would mockery of that I did not feel
Be good for them or me? Could sympathy
Echo to mockeries? and, if it could,
Mine could not answer theirs; how could I feel
The first ambition to be foremost now
At ball-play, or upon the chariot-course,
A hunter, or a wrestler, or a swimmer,
When memory told me of far other things?
Of triumphs won, and glories, that since then
Drank like the noonday sun the dews of morn,
The innocent first prides, and happy crowns?

And yet the first ambition was as strong,
Ay, stronger than the man's who seeks a throne,
Or a new realm ; as tireless as the search
Of power, or wealth, or honour ; could it be ?
Then a swift picture cross'd my tearful eyes.
I saw myself a boy, but twelve years old,
Girt for the race along the smooth-shorn green.
My eager friends had match'd me to outrun
One elder by two years, and he had mock'd,
And laugh'd, and warn'd me back ; and then he said ;
“ Go to—start twenty paces on before me,
Ere thou hast taken twenty of thine own,
I shall be twenty paces on before thee.”
I scorn'd his proffer ; we stood foot to foot.
My fresh nerves, tighten'd by my eager will,
Like to a bowstring drawn by a strong hand,
Made arrows of my feet, and I flew on,
And heard my shouting fellows, when they burst
Into a triumph, as I clutch'd the goal. . .
And oh, methought, 'twere sweet to raze from thought
All other victories, and leave but that,
The glory of that first acclaim, of those
Who gloried in me ! Oh ! what music since
Hath lifted up my heart to such delight,
Tho', by the side of better conquests won,
It were as nought ? Yet other conquests won
Have left no moment in my memory, sweet
As that, when little hearts and voices shrill
Spake to me, as thro' silver trumpet-tones !

And, tho' young senses might delight and bask
In beauty's eyes, where should I now bestow
That heart, which long ago another held,
Whose dear face, thro' the mist of years, look'd back
On me, whose voice, heard thro' the silent past,
Whose beauty, in the mirror of my mind,
Was seen as clearly, and more fondly loved,
Than any of the fairest of these days,
Who pass'd before me? Would the heart rewarmed
With its warm blood, or would the eyes, for all
Their brightness now, be tenderer than they were,
When fill'd with tenderest tears, at thought of her,
Tho' dim with age? Then came the first of ills.
Alcimeda, who, since that day of folly,
Had lain with hush'd lips turn'd toward the wall,
Sign'd to me, lifting on me her pale face,
And bad me to her with that voice of old,
All tenderness, but as a whisper now.
“Beloved, O beloved, come to me;
For I can bear to pardon thee, to hear thee,
To speak to thee, and listen to thy voice,
As once I heard it on that April morn,
When we two, wandering on the river shore,
Set, as with rainbows, with the springing flowers,
Look'd down upon the mirror of the stream,
And saw that lovely picture of our love,
Two perfect forms, our mutual arms entwined,
And circling each the other, as lithe vine
That leans its young arms from one guardian tree,

And meets halfway the young arms from another.
That picture now I see with clearest eyes,
But not the eyes thou sawest yesterday ;
For I am blind, O Æson, I am blind.
And better so, than see thee as I saw,
Mine aged helpmate mocking me with youth.
With that dread sight, in pity for my pain,
Methinks the Gods have burnt out my old eyes.
But I can bear to listen to thee now,
And answer thee, because I see no more
My wrinkled arms, my curved frame ; and so
Fancy I am thy young bride, as of old.
Now that my strength grows hourly less, and all
The world of Nature is a starless night
To the outward eye, I find an inner sense,
That shows me things beyond all phantasy.
We shall not languish in an endless dream,
And vain regret of all that we have lost,
This earth and sun ; nor will our spirits be
As moonbeams faint, and cold, and pale ; but all
The virtue that our souls have gather'd here,
The wisdom and the knowledge we have won,
Shall live again, and put on year by year
Strength upon strength, as the returning sun
Soars from the depths of winter day by day
With added power and glory. And the flower
Of youth, that here the autumn of old age
Sheds off, shall bloom again as in the spring,
In that New Life, but with a radiant light

Of beauty, such as never dawns on earth,
And is but shadow'd in the Poet's eye,
Which dimly sees, what shall hereafter be,
The perfect Flower of Time ; that lifts its head
Out of the dead earth of Mortality
Into the pure airs of Eternity.

Therefore my heart takes comfort ; for I see,
In these fair visions, many whom I knew
Children, a child myself, who left us soon.

Yet they are not grown old as I am now,
But stood before me, as the fadeless flowers
That feel no winter. Many, who were old,
As I am now, when they left us behind,
I saw reborn, restrung, recrown'd with life,
As tho' midwinter drear should all at once
Turn back to the dear summer, whence he fell,
And the dead roses should burst out again !

Therefore I know, that, if I go before,
I shall put on my lovely youth anew.

But thou, unwise one, to be pitied more
Than she who quits thee, will be chain'd once more
To a new life, and to another death ;
For Death is not what he hath seem'd to thee.
Death is the daily lapse from good to ill ;
Death is the fall from strength to weakness ; Death
The falling off of blisses, leaf by leaf ;
The pining for the loves we have no more ;
And not the last swift parting of the breath,
Which is the upward moving of that wing

That wafts to godlike being ; now I know !
And thou hast died, O Æson ; once hast died,
And now in thy fresh life wilt die again !
I know I shall be clothed in beauty there,
In that far land whither I go ; henceforth,
When thou hast tasted all vain joys afresh,
And wakest to that wisdom which the Gods
Have breathed into my spirit, since my heart
Was broken by thee, just before I die ;
Thou shalt pray daily for the death, which now
Thou fliest from. And when thy trembling hands
Are stretcht forth, morn by morn, unto that clime,
That lies beyond the sunrise in the east,
I shall be near, I know I shall be near,
To see, to stay, to comfort thee ; to hear
Thy tongue confess the folly of thy fears.
And those young eyes, that see me aged now,
Dim with the long years of a second life,
Shall look upon me in my youth again,
Like thy once bride, yet fairer ; and the home
I shall prepare thee, shall be like to that
We enter'd on that April morn of old.”
And, as she spoke, she lifted up her head ;
Her eye was lightning, and a godlike smile
Play'd on her lip a moment ; and then all
Grew ashy-grey, as when the mountain-tops
Lose the last glory of the setting sun.
Oh ! all she was, was nothing to me now ;
“Alas !” I cried—“and will be nevermore !”

For, though her words were as an oracle,
Rapturous, and wing'd with hope, as soaring fire,
They went no deeper than my listening ear,
And knock'd against my coward heart in vain
That day : but, like dread ghosts, they rose once more
To buffet me, when youth was gone again.

IV

In days of old the first voice that I heard,
After the merry birds of dawn, was hers.
Sure as the breeze of morning, bearing up,
From the dew-laden woods and plots of flowers,
The newborn sweets, upbreathing with the day,
Her reawaken'd heart went forth in song,
That broke into my dreams, and I arose.
And now I dreamt again—but she was not
To call me up with music—and my dream
Sweetest of all, and saddest, was of her.
Ah ! there we were, as on that April morn,
Bending above the brook, with linked hands.
No shadow fell upon me of regrets,
Or timorous apprehensions ; no one cloud
Of all the griefs that haunted me by day ;
The past was present, and that present more
Than all the past itself. I held her hand
Glowing with love and youth. “ Alcimeda !
Dearest,” I cried, “ Alcimeda, the Gods
Have dealt most gently with me ; for I dreamt

We two were stricken with the lack of all
That makes life worth the living ; youth's warm spring
Was gone for ever ; manhood's midsummer,
Grand in its storms and glories, had declined
Into autumnal shadows ; these had pass'd,
And we stood underneath the winter night
Frozen and still, the deepening night of age
Darkness without a star ! And now 'tis morn,
Morn, and our griefs and terrors were a dream.
'Tis morn ; I see thee once again, renew'd
In all that beauty which the wand of sleep—
Subtle to stretch out moments into years,
Or lock up years in moments—made me fear
Was past away for ever, long ago.
That loveliest of all fair realities
Itself became unreal as a dream ;
O happy day ! with many more to be
Happy, and happier ! I will drowsie no more
With thoughts of weariness, of age, and death,
With all the future lying in our sight,
Like this fair champaign with its dewy green,
Quivering with light and colours, on, far on,
Up to the mountain slopes, and glorious clouds ! ”
“ So jocund is my heart,” was her reply,
“ That, O my lover, I could fling away
All burthen of mortality this hour,
With thee ! with thee ! and we shall die no more.
Death is a painful sleep, and nothing more ;
And lo ! 'tis past ! This very morn we flee

Where neither fear nor care can follow us,
But Hope lead on for ever into realms
That lie beyond the summits ; and we live
Over again, divinely perfected,
Those hours, that fled from us too soon on earth,
That fled ere we could grasp them ; like a beam,
Chased by a shadow o'er a breezy field.”
Even to my slumbering sense her tuneful words
Seem'd strange, and phrenzied, and, through all my bliss,
A chill shot down, as from an icy peak
Frone air through all the sunlight ; and the fear
Shatter'd the golden vision, and I woke,
Lamenting. Then I knew the words were true ;
And, if we met, it must be in a dream,
But, face to face and living, nevermore !

V

When that great grief was wash'd away in tears,
And sighings ceased, like mists before the sun,
My young life made me restless, and I sought
To slake the unnatural vitality
By frequent wanderings over land and sea.
I pass'd thro' many lands, o'er mount and plain,
Saw divers cities, spake with many men.
But to make friends I must dissemble now,
And this was evil—a struggle and a pain.
How could I hold wise converse with the wise ?
Tell of my lifelong trials, joys, and cares ?

Speak of dead loves, a youth myself? discourse
Of boyish impulses, myself a boy?
When Nature is no mirror of herself,
And lookers-on know more of us than we
Ourselves, it was for ever to keep watch
Upon my words; as, speaking of great names
Departed, bygone battles lost or won,
Men cast strange eyes upon me, and I heard
Whisperings, or jeering laughter; and some said
Under their breath, "O liar!" or "O fool!"
While others only murmur'd "He is mad!"
Sometimes a youth would take me for his friend,
And knit his arm with mine, and in mine ears
Pour all his hopes, and fears, his prides, and wrongs,
And seek to win my sympathy with all.
But I was cold to hear of his delights,
Love-swoons, and raptures; at his wrath I smiled.
But it was sad to look upon his face,
And see therein the image of some friend,
Born the same year with me, gone long ago,
Who with such words once would have spurr'd me on
To any venture, and have won my will,
My wit, my prowess, ay, my life itself,
To strengthen him. If some fair girl should lean
Toward me, and, with momentary warmth
And glowing speech, kindled by thoughts of mine
Dear to me once, should answer me, as I
Had answer'd her, when those fair thoughts were new,
And smile in loving sympathy, then sigh

And droop her eyes ; coldly I turn'd apart,
Not without sorrow ; wherefore should I win
A heart with which mine could not beat accord ?
“ Alas ! ” I cried, “ 'tis well great Death is pale,
And cold, and bloodless, else Himself would seek
Rather to die than snatch away the living ;
Rather than any more to walk the world
A mockery to himself, a snare to others ! ”
Sometimes a wrinkled sneerer at young men
Would scoff at my wise answers, deeper than
His knowledge. And how strange it seem'd to me,
That I might say unto him, if I would,
“ Old ? thou art young enough to be mine heir ;
And I who seem to count but twenty summers,
Have reckon'd up more than an hundred winters,
I seem thy grandson, but I am thy grandsire ! ”

VI

Once, when eight decades of my earlier life
Were well-nigh over (and so clear remains
The picture in my memory, that it seems
As yesterday), I wander'd forth, my heart
Full of its discontent, and bitterness,
Thro' bowered walks beyond the city-gate.
And lovely was that early summer's eve,
Beyond all art ; the sun had set but now,
And fired the glorious cloud-palaces ;
And lit up the gigantic temples, domed

With silver ; and a soft wind from the seas
Crept o'er the dusky gardens, bearing up
Rich breath of their blown roses, and all flowers.
But all things seem'd to mock my sad old age,
That told of youth and beauty ; the hoarse wail
Of rising waters, and of stormy winds,
Had been more tuneful to my restless mood ↗
Than any sight or sound of summer. Soon
The twilight deepen'd, and the western gold
Changed into ruby ; my deep musing drew,
By little and by little, the rapt sense
From outward things. I heard at intervals
The nightingales, from out the shadows warm,
Of flowering thickets, call to one another.
When suddenly far other sights and sounds
Startled me from my trance ; and lo ! there turn'd
A bridal pomp into the public way
Out of a sidewalk, and came on to meet me
With songs and cymbals, and with torches waved,
And paniers piled with lilies ; but the mirth
And music shock'd me like a battle cry.
Oh ! I remember'd thus my own dear bride,
Brought to my home long years ago ; ah me !
How lovely was that even, and the night
Of that great day. I saw the torchlight dance
In her dark eyes, and turn them into stars.
How smooth that brow, now ribb'd with years and care,
Like seasands, fretted with unnumber'd tides ;
How golden-bright that flowing hair, now grey

With time, like the sere leaves in January.
And yet to me the glory of that day,
Repeated after all those years, stirr'd in me
No sympathy with rapture, and with youth,
But rather envy, bitterness and wrath.

I fled back to a dark grove by the way,
Whose inner blackness made the outer show,
The flitting flames, and colour of the robes,
Brighter by contrast ; on a cypress-stem
I leant, and saw the nuptial chariot pass
Slowly. The lights, the songs, the ruby sky,
Seem to me all a lovely vision now,
But then as cruel as the frowning Fates.

A sudden flash of torchlight show'd the face
Of the young bride ; O Heavens ! methought I saw
Once more the face of my Alcimeda,
In flower of virgin beauty ; I rush'd forth
Not knowing what I did ; some youth went by
Praising her loveliness, and then I heard
She was a young kinswoman of my wife.
The beauty that had faded was not lost ;
Behold the sun, long set, was risen again,
In sweet Euarete : how can I tell
The wonder and the auguish of my soul ;
The cruel magic passing—vanishing—
And leaving me despair ? The chariot stay'd
Before the portal of the bridegroom's home.
He, in the pride of strength, and bloom of grace,
Moulded like Phœbus, lord of many lands,

And treasures, wedded her, the morning-star
Of a long day of light, and life, and love.
I parted not, and swore to drain the cup
Of sad regrets ; I enter'd with the rest
Amid the shadows, and I stole behind
Some laurels in the garden, and I heard
The tumult of the festival ; I mark'd
The dancers moving 'mid the silver lamps ;
I heard the midnight hymeneal song ;
And some came forth into the starlit walks
Whispering together ; then I fled away
Lest I should curse them whom I could not bless,
And make myself accursed ; so I fled ;
But all my vengeance was a deepdrawn sigh.
“O happy pair !” I cried, “your day will come :
I would not bid it hasten if I could.
But, if ye live to taste the lees of joy,
There is no bitterer taste like that, I warn ye.
Live, live ; perchance some tongue, as old as mine,
Blest me, when I was even as ye are,
And I too bless ye, may no night fall on ye,
Dismal as mine ; *Oh rather pray that fire*
From heaven may smite ye both the selfsame moment ! ”
I fled away, weeping unmanly tears.
I thought again of that delighted pair,
Loving and lovely ; they had sought their home,
And enter'd crown'd with blisses. When they reach
My years since I was wed, will they go forth
Together ? will not one be left to weep ?

VII

And now four decades of my other life
Had gone by, and I stood again, in strength
Like a tall forest-tree, six months ago
Seeming as dead, and then renew'd in spring,
Now flourishing in summer. In a tree
The sap might rise ; in my recover'd might
What was there left of youth ? a sculptur'd tomb
Of Parian marble, richly wrought without,
Was not more cold within ; for many years
I had not thought of those two youthful mates.
Sad moods had held me ; Alcimeda was dead ;
My heart, that pulsed with youth, could beat no more
For any other ; and it chanced again
That I again had sought my native shore
After long wanderings over other lands.
Cities, and customs, chance and change, and good,
And ill, and words, and deeds of many men,
Lay quivering, like a slowly gather'd haze,
Between me and the past. It chanced again
I wander'd thro' the old embowered walks
Without the city ; I stood beside the gate
Of that same garden where I once lay hid
That evening of the bridal. I look'd up ;
I marvell'd at the silence, I who knew
That home and its indwellers ; I remember'd
My own thoughts then, I marvell'd at the silence !
While thus I stood, I heard faint sounds, and saw

The great doors open flung, and there came forth
A funeral company ; upon two biers
Two aged forms were lying side by side,
Their foreheads wreath'd with flowers; and then I spoke
The foremost of the mourners. "Friend," I said—
"I am a stranger ; tell me who are these."
"Needs must thou be a stranger," he replied ;
"Or needless 'twere to tell thee who are these.
In all the city there is not an eye
But knoweth, as his own, familiarly,
The aspects of this good man and his wife ;
The loving-hearted, sweet Euarete ;
Euphron the just, the noble, and the wise."
I shook, as though it thunder'd ; I had seen,
And had not known them ; for remembrance brought
Only to mind the image of that eve,
That blissful bridal, and the years between
I had not counted ; I was young and strong,
Could they be old ? I knew I had been old,
While they were young. Alas ! full forty years
Had sped since that bright night ; six decades roll'd
Over those two, and yet their goodly forms
Might have sustain'd three decades more of life,
And seen their great grandchildren at their knees,
Had it not been that the Immortals will'd
To save them from the evils yet to be,
By snatching them away, while yet they knew
Glory, and honour, and prosperity.
"How died they, friend, I pray thee learn me this?"

"It is a wondrous thing I tell thee now,"
He answer'd—"It was in the vintage-time
Among the hills, and they went forth to mark
The vintagers, and cheer them at their toil
With words and deeds of kindness. When the day
Was not far gone, a sudden tempest rose,
And a great darkness wrapt the land, and drove
The scared villagers this way and that.
The aged pair sought refuge underneath
An aged oak ; when down the lightning flew,
And thunder follow'd, like a voice, that bad
The countryfolk turn back, to mark the end
Of these their lifelong friends ; and yet not mourn,
As tho' to die together without pain,
When the fair cup of their good deeds was full,
Were not a boon. For there they lay in peace,
And side by side—ev'n as ye see them now—
Shot thro' by one swift bolt !" I stood, as though
Myself were smitten with a bolt like that,
Dumb and astonished ; for, like phantoms, pass'd
My own words thro' me—*Oh rather pray that fire
From heaven may smite ye at the selfsame moment.*"
Were they a vision, or a prophecy ?
Were they a blessing turn'd into a curse ?
Or but a curse that sounded like a blessing ?
For I remember'd now the evil mood
That held me then, and how I fled away
To smother my dark thoughts. I trembled now,
Howbeit they were gone, and I was left ;

They, with grey hair and wrinkled brows, who were
Dazzling in youth, when I was old and bow'd ;
Now, I was fresh and mighty once again.
Ah, there they lay ! it was a wondrous sight.
How could it be ? yet it was so, and I
Bent o'er their placid faces, to recall,
Under the rude disfigurements of Time,
Their beauty as I saw it first. Ah me !
It was a wondrous sight, and I could hear
Unutterable voices in my soul !

VIII

Then came a sadder day ; for they, who once
Had seen me aged and forlorn, went by me
In the swift race of life. Our states were changed,
Inversely ; I was young, who had been old,
And they were aged, who had first been young.
The smooth brows I had envied, the clear sight,
And supple strength, had been transferr'd to me,
And they were pale, and palsied, deaf, and blind.
Ah ! then came thoughts I never dream'd before,
Was there another Life ? Was this a rung
Of a great ladder, all whose steps were ages,
Higher and higher lifting into light
The blissful spirit ? God ! what have I done !
I wept, I cried, "What is it I have done ?"
Oh ! dread enchantments that have left me curst !
The fruit whereof is vanity and woe,

And desolation ! whither shall I flee,
Where turn me, where the last familiar friend,
Is parted ? what if these, myself as well,
Henceforth were bound for happy voyages
To undiscover'd isles ! What if they now
Be landing there, and gazing round them smile
In bliss past utterance, as a sweeter air
Breathes on them, and a brighter sunlight falls ?
What if this youth I vainly yearn'd for here,
Which binds me to the earth, and to its sorrows,
Clothes them now in a moment with a life,
Such as this fleshly house can never hold,
And strength, and powers, that Gods alone possess ?
What have I done ? If I be young once more,
Is not my state that of a palsied wretch
Stretch'd by the wayside helpless, whom no hand
Can succour, while, behold, the glorious pomp
Of the great living dead goes by with songs,
Up to the golden City of the Gods,
And godlike men ; and from behind the walls
He hears the hymnings of the free, while I
Lie weeping and forsaken ? O vain man,
To turn back thus into a world of pain,
Just as my hand was on the gate of heaven !
Should this be so ? Great Gods ! what have I done ?
O young eyes, blinder than mine aged orbs,
Be blotted out ! Ye fires within my blood
Be quench'd once more ! Blood dancing in my veins
Be turn'd to water ! that I may fall back

Once more into the dimness of old age.
Better its twilights, and its moonlight hopes,
Than darkness and the midnight of despair !

IX

Then came the inevitable fate of those,
Who, in this world of space and time, forget
That man, imprison'd there, must needs remain
Blind occupant of this mysterious earth,
Which may not be unriddled, but by those
Who have forsook it ; and so go the round
Of the old instincts, and the dusty waste,
Whereon fresh dews can never fall again ;
Till the heart sighs for darkness in the day,
And sleep with pleasant dreams than aught without them :
Who dream of Immortality in Time ;
While Death, so call'd, is but the step, beneath
The adamantine archway of that gate,
That opens into morningland ; where they,
Who went before us, taste their hearts' desire,
Feast on the life they dream'd of ; love and hope,
And wait for us ; while I, a fetter'd slave,
Clung to the dust of space, and thought to cheat
My own heart to renew the early fires
From their grey, outburnt embers. Such was I,
A death in life, a statue made to move,
Beneath whose painted surface only lay
Impenetrable darkness, without blood,

Or nerves, or bones. Grief seized on me, and fear,
Now that I stood upon the frozen peak
Of twofold age—that which I had desired,
In dread of Death, and vain regret of youth,
And dreamt of as the foremost boon of all,
The crown of crowns, the best felicity
The Gods could give us, immortality
On this sad earth, began to shake me, as
The curse of curses ! What ! to wander on
In weariness for ever, like a stream
Lock'd into frozen armour ; strive in vain
To charm back warmth into a living death ;
Rekindle passions, phantasies, and hopes,
With nought to hope for more, imagine, feel ;
Till my sad, silent, sunless winterday,
My waking state, more like a dreamless sleep,
Should weep at even for the morn, at morn
For even. O retribution worse than Death !
O fearful vengeance of the wrinkled Fates !
Were not to be abolish'd, to be nought,
And mere unconsciousness, without regret,
Better than such selfconscious desolation ?

X

And now I saw, with that clear inner eye,
That wakens when the outer eyes are dim,
What once I had repeated to myself,
With boyhood's easy mockery of the wise,

Words without knowledge ; while warm-hearted hope
Set the fair future on a moveless base
Of adamant, forgetful of all wreck
And ruin, careless unto all the past.
I saw and felt the vanity of all,
The vanity of vanities ! and tired
And crippled of the faculties of joy,
Fill'd with all knowledge that could yield no fruit,
Cold to the beauty of a new-sprung thought,
Philosophies could bring me no delight,
Dead to the royal charms of poesy,
Or pictured life, or carvedwork. All arts
Had lost their cunning ; save, perchance, the spell
Of some old song that, breathing on the deeps
Of memory, for a moment ruffled them,
And drew forth tears, not like the thunderdrops
Flung from young eyes, that bring a brighter sun,
But as the blood-drops from a broken heart,
That set my frame a shaking as with death,
A stranger now to tumult, whether grief
Or joy, and dead to life, though still alive.
I wonder'd, tho' 'twas wonder at myself
As once I was, to mark the eager will,
The fretful, anxious cares, the stormy lights
Of hopes and disappointments, that o'ercame
The wavering soul, the sole aim of the great,
And of the small, to get a foothold here,
Upon these shifting sands of Time ; to build
A home thereon that should not fall for ever.

I marvell'd now to see such deaf and blind,
While strong men in their labours were cut down.
And if a chief came back from battlefield
Unharm'd, some swift, still dart of pestilence
Struck him at his own hearthstone ; wealth, piled up
Thro' years of hungry greed, was melted down
By one hot summer of folly ; earthquakes crack'd
Huge ancient citadels, as the strong hills
Buttress'd against all time ; while structures new,
Gay pleasure-houses, deck'd with youngest arts,
Open'd to festal cheer, to dance and song,
In the same night were swept with fatal fire.
Promise of mighty harvest came to nought,
Thro' drought, and vintage, thro' untimely rains.
Thick as the forest leaves in autumn days,
That stay the wonderer's steps, the memories lay
Around me of inconstancy and change ;
But their ear heard not, nor their eye could see.
Story was nought, nor knowledge to be wrung
Now, as of old, from old things seeming new :
Why not ? Why should I wander ? Happy they
Dreaming futurity ! I had no dreams
But of the dead ; the lands that I had pass'd
Lay far and grey behind me ; they step on
Swiftly toward the dawn. True, I might sigh
At thoughts of all their coming ills ; what clouds
Of sorrows twenty, ten years, might bring up
From fathomless abysses ; but should I,
A wintry wind, moaning thro' leafless boughs,

Startle them, if indeed 'twere possible,
With cruel apprehension? Vain regrets
Would reach them soon enough; could I make them
See shadows underneath a zenith sun?
Or hear the echoes of their own wild mirth
Dying thro' sighs to silence? Let them laugh,
And sing as I have done; the day of dole
Comes surely; is not sorrow the keynote
Of the weird chant of Time? Oh look around,
And listen; mark the motions on the face
Of Nature; hath not every light its shade?
All golden harmony its dissonance?
Far off victorious pæans, bridal songs,
Sound as the wailings of a funeral.
The morning seas bursting upon the sands,
And throwing up their waters in the wind,
Translucent with the sunlight, and afire
With rainbow colours, that make glad the eyes,
And weaving, with the breeze, a glorious hymn,
That draws down echoes from the cliffs and shores;
Look, underneath the many-colour'd lights—
Listen, beneath the many-voiced sounds—
Thou wilt see darkness, hear a deep-drawn tone
Like endless lamentation. Lo! a cloud
Will breathe a chill wind on the happy flowers,
That in their noonday beauty were as queens,
When twilight deepens o'er them. Beauty sighs
To think of the swift years, and Strength laments
That he must fail; and none so lone but hath

Pale Sorrow for his sister, though unseen.
If Youth steps forth into the morning sun,
Wedded to Hope, that walks at his right hand,
Sorrow, the shadow, takes the other side.

XI

When I was left alone upon the earth
At last, with not a soul of all I loved
To cheer me, when the gulf of second age
Had swallow'd up my second life, again
Thoughts of the first old age that I had borne
Mix'd with the second, as night speaks to night
In silence and in shadows, and in fears ;
Till the two long perspectives grew to one.
The old, far spectres jostled one another
Along that moonlit road ; and then again
They parted, and the ancient ghosts of all
Drown'd in so far a distance, that I dream'd,
Sometimes, that one half of the awful past
Of this my double life was not in Time,
But sunder'd by immeasurable years.
And, o'er the wailing waters, I could hear
The voices of those far-off inner days,
Like dreams in noonlight. In that gloomy calm
Of twofold Eld, I sat, as in a cave ;
And all the murmurs of the life of man,
Its conflicts and its triumphs, all the mirth
And beauty of the morning, as it rose,

With songs of birds, and children, and unbound
The wings of balmy winds, and blew the drops
Of sweet dews o'er my forehead, came to me,
As unto one, o'er whom the waters roll
Deeper, and deeper still. And then I heard
(Silence, and twilight round me) in my heart's
Far galleries, as it were, the banded tongues
Of all my years, uplifted into one
Acclaim ; as when, far down in rayless vales,
The torrents, fallen from the golden peaks,
Are floated on the wind. Methought I heard
The accents of old friends, and over clouds
Saw their raised heads, and outstretch'd arms ; methought
They call'd me ; whither ? Could I wish to live
Another life ? Ah ! yes, with them, with them,
But where were they ? What if this mortal life,
Which I had dared to meet a second time,
Were but the narrow gate thro' which we pass,
As from a lamp-lit slumbrous chamber, to
The million lights of Day ? If I had borne,
As bliss, a bitter wrong unto myself,
Deeming my fortune better than all men's
Who had not length of days ? O fool, O fool !
If this were so, and this poor life a cell,
Re-enter'd by some faint o'erwearied man,
With eyes so weak, they dared not meet the sun !

XII

As heretofore, when Youth came back to me,
I startled the old men, whose years were short
Of mine, although I was a beardless boy,
By bearing living witness to a Past
Behind their utmost memories, so now,
In holding converse with the younger ones,
(Albeit hoar-headed men with half-blind eyes)
Because their years, tho' many, halv'd not mine,
I shock'd them by my dark oblivion ;
Or seem'd to mock them, as I heap'd upon them
Days more than ever fall unto the lot
Of mere mortality. And so it fell,
That once, in speaking of a Chief of old,
Great in renown, who moved the world, when I,
The young and fervent lover of high deeds,
Worship'd his name—it was the eventide
And we were holding pleasant talk together,—
I turn'd unto an old man sitting by,
About my own years, when my youth return'd
(And when the hair is white, the eyes are dim,
And the limbs shake, what sign is there to mark
Whose years are seven times ten, whose seventy times ?)
And who, for all his wrinkles and hoar hair,
Might be my grandson, ask'd him unawares,
“Sir, you have seen him at the festivals,
And chariot races?” But he sat amazed,
And, with a faint smile, and some wondering tones,

He answer'd, while some others shook their heads ;
“ Seen him ? If I have rightly heard the name,
O friend, he left the earth, ere I was born ! ”
And then I would bethink me, with a sigh,
That he, whose old age differ'd not from mine
In visible outward seeming, had his birth
In time three generations after mine.
Once again involv'd in the far Past,
That seem'd the Present to me—all between
Wrapt in thick darkness—thinking of a friend,
Unconsciously unto myself I said ;
“ Yes he was sick ten days ago, and I
Had nigh forgotten him ! What have I done ?
What will he judge me, for he loved me well ?
Dear soul, and we have laugh'd and wept together !
This very day I go to comfort him ;
Well thought ! but better still, this very hour.
And, turning down a bypath thro' the vines,
I reach the well-known garden, with the seats
Under the trellis'd pampinus, that screen'd
The august noon ; whose fluttering roof of leaves
Shot wandering arrows of the sunlight through
Upon the dappled floor ; and overhead
The gold and purple clusters hung to hand.
But now I gaze in vain. Is this a dream ?
Or have I only dream'd ? For now I see
No hospitable settles of cool stone,
Where the tired children laid their ruffled heads,
Or scrawl'd their names, with the old dog beneath ;

No waterpots in order, full and cold,
Fresh from the rockborn spring, heard plashing near,
No lintels hid with roses, no fair face,
No young hands piling ripe fruits on the board,
With the two goblets, and the breathing flowers.
Ah me! ah me! there are strange faces here,
Another dwelling this, and other hosts.
I marvel as I look, they marvel too ;
I stay my tears ; again 'twixt Now and Then
Rolls the dark river of two hundred years,
And there is Silence ! Silence !

XIII

More than all,
'Twas chiefly in the stillness of that hour,
'Twixt night and day, when, musing in half-dream,
I heard the finches in the thicket greet
The dawn, with such swift notes of jubilee,
They seem'd as sparks thrown upward from one fire.
Dreams came which gave me back my childish years—
Boyhood, and youth—and stirr'd again my heart
With a faint pulse of the first living loves,
Which, like the embers, shrouded in grey ash,
Blown by the shrunken lips of some weird hag,
Blaze up once more. 'Twas then I saw myself
Throned at some festal board, and purple-robed,
My brows wreath'd with red roses, and my hand
Sweeping the lyre, that lent its silver tongue

To my lovesongs, while dark, yet star-bright eyes
Of young girls clasping one another's necks,
And listening with their dewy lips apart,
Laugh'd their delight to hear me. Again I see
The black eyes, and the brown eyes, and the blue ;
The dark hair and the golden ; the tall form
Majestical as Dian ; the lithe limbs
Of sweet sixteen, her bloom, and virgin grace,
As of a wood-nymph. All of them I see ;
But where are they ? Oh treacherous memory
Shows me a moment only ; mournful thought,
With eyes awake, shows me the waste between,
Scatter'd with their old bones, and broken by
The lights and shadows of their many fates.
Again, behold, between the Then and Now,
Rolls the dark river of two hundred years ;
And there is Silence ! Silence ! Chiefly then,
Awaken'd by young voices out of sleep,
Clear voices long since silent, I leap up,
And we run down unto the twilight sand,
And, plunging into the transparent blue
Of summer waters, pure as diamond,
Pluck from the golden floor of the still sea,
Many a gem, coral stone, or sheeny shell,
Starfish, or oozy leaf, or seaflower pale.
And, just as I came up to take a breath,
The sun rose too, and flashing in my face
Dazzled mine eyes with rainbows ; and the shouts
Of my companions reach'd me from afar,

Faint, out of other waters ; when in haste
And heedless, I o'ertask my little strength,
And failing, swooning, sinking in the deep,
Throw up my arms with a great cry ! and—wake
Trembling—and lo, between the Now and Then
Rolls the dark river of two hundred years,
And there is Silence ! Silence !

XIV

Once again,
In this awakening hour, 'twixt night and day,
I go forth to the games, my heart refresh'd,
My might renew'd with weeks of mountain air.
My eye is resolute, my cheek aglow ;
My arms like writhen iron, and my hand
Twisted in my deep hair. I stride along
To meet my foe, who is my friend ; our limbs
Are supple with the olive, and our skins
Tawny with summer, and my heart is great
Within me, and my hope untameable
Of victory, honour, hymnings, and a crown !
We two were friends born in the selfsame year,
He was the taller. Now we clutch each other ;
We sway, lock'd in the fierce embrace of pride ;
And, even in dream, the proud awaken'd soul
Works in me, writhing all my prostrate form,
And makes the muscles, in my idle arms
Start in my sleep ! I pant, as one who hangs

'Twixt very life and death. We rock, we reel ;
No pause, no momentary span unwrung
With agony, to which the mortal pang
Itself were pleasant pastime. Ah ! there is
No interval to look up to the sky,
To breathe a breath of freshness from the hills,
The sunlit waving forests, glad with morn,
The peaceful flocks, and glittering rills ; or look
Upon the eager ring of lookers on,
The vast crowd shaken as a rolling sea,
Hearts beating, and eyes beaming with our own,
In sympathetic triumph, joy, and fear ;
Or, when a turn of skill came unforeseen,
The tumult, and the shouting ! O great Gods !
What dread is this ? What ! do I faint and fail ?
O blest Alcides, for a moment more
Of strength from thee ! Alas, I fall ! I wake
With dews of anguish on my wither'd brow ;
My moveless arms are lying cold beside me.
O Heaven, to think upon that moment then,
Ev'n though I be all-conscious and awake,
Thrills me with trembling pulses, kin to those
I felt in the old strife and in the dream !
The glorious pride within me, towering up,
Threw down its dreadful shadow, fear of shame !
At once, the rings and bars of adamant,
That link'd the deathproof armour of my will,
Seem'd to be drawn out by a sickly ghost.
Had not Despair himself, the giant, driven

Back the old bolts into their place again,
The metal of my manhood had been loosed,
And every hope had fallen to the earth,
So tenfold might rush'd back again to meet
The torrent of that momentary fear.
But now comes memory, and I knew that he,
Who was about to throw me in my dream,
Himself was vanquish'd, fourscore years before
My first long life had waned unto its night.
And then I weep, and fain would give him all,
The triumph, and the praises, and the crown ;
Once more, once more to take his hand, to look
Upon his face again ! 'Twixt Now and Then
Rolls the dark river of two hundred years,
And there is silence ! Still the happy birds
Twitter, the green leaves twinkle ; and I see
The Dawn, the Dawn, the everlasting Dawn,
With orient Life, with dewy breath, and songs,
And Victory, throned 'twixt wings of rosy cloud,
And Joy, and torrent light, and rolling flame !

XV

And then I felt a sorrow, worse than all
That I had felt before. I cried to Heaven,
I wail'd, I stretch'd my arms. But who is there ?
One of the great Gods, or some godlike Man ?
For full before me, right against the sun,
There stood a glorious shape, ineffable,

Clad in white raiment, and his aspect shone
With such a light, that it put out the sun.
Blinded I trembled, and I hid mine eyes.
And then a voice. "Lo ! I am He, O man,
Whom thou hast dreaded all thy life-long days.
My Name is Life, but they have call'd me Death,
And so misnamed. And, if I come for thee,
Be not discomfited, there is no fear ;
Life cannot fail, Death is Immortal Life !"
I veil'd my eyes from him, I cried aloud
To that great shape who stood against the sun.
"O Death, Death, Death ! that I have fear'd so much ;
What sayest Thou ? dost Thou too speak of Life ?
Mock me not with such words, for thou and I
May not abide together, well I know.
And, if I see thee living, 'tis a sign
I may no longer live. I see thee there,
And Thou art come for me. But hold, great King,
Spare me ; my sighs and tears, and vain regrets,
My weariness of Nature, are not so bad
As endless darkness without hope of day ;
Motionless silence without thought or act ;
Or ev'n despair, which is a living Death ;
Or ev'n the uncouth dreams, that come and go
Thro' the strait gates of sleep. Oh give me Life,
Although it be no sweeter than the wine
Thrice mix'd with water. I will take it back ;
'Tis better to bestow than take away.
Once an Enchantress brought me back my Youth ;

Leave me the deathless sorrow of Old Age
Rather than Nought." And I bow'd down to Him—
But He, Death, answer'd, glorious as a God—
"Why dost thou deem, that, what no others taste,
Is best for thee? If all men from the first,
Made of the dust, had stood on dust unchanged,
They must have died ev'n of the boon they craved,
Or lived together, with no more delight
Than fetter'd captives cast into a pit,
One o'er the other, till the pit was full.
There is one Life, but One, whence others flow;
That cannot die, nor they that flow from it.
Life cannot die; else would all things that be
Cease in a moment, nothing left but Nought;
As, (though it be a frail similitude),
When the great Eye of Nature is withdrawn,
The Earth is dark, all living creatures fail;
As, when the fountains dry up in the hills,
The rivers perish; and that Inmost Life
Is all in all, feeding them with itself.
So, if thou wilt not cease, thou wilt be changed;
And ev'n the Immortals know no more than this.
I am the appointed Messenger to thee,
Whom hadst thou follow'd, when thy time was come,
Thou hadst gone back to ever onward Youth,
And Youth for evermore more beautiful.
But now, behold, thou art turn'd back again
To that same loveless Age thou didst abhor.
O Mortal, thinkest thou the thirst of Good,

Of Truth, of Beauty, was inborn in thee,
Not to be satisfied? Can it be quench'd
In the poor fretful life of fourscore years,
When half the Universe of outward things
Is hidden wholly, and the other half
Is all but hidden from thee, and Thyself
Art but a daily riddle to Thyself?
What boots it thee to know all thou hast known
If all goes down into the dust with thee,
And shall become the heritage of none?
Remember, how these very riddles once
Harrow'd thy soul, ere first old age had come.
Remember how thy voice did utter them
Lamenting in the autumn woods; for I
Breathed in thy heart such motions, as might lead
Thy spirit on to wisdom, but in vain."
Again I said—"Shall we take with us hence
The joys and sorrows of our Being here?
Shall Vanity and Mockery live again?
Shall hollow-hearted Merriment go on,
Laughing at all things in his Self-delight?
Shall Pride, and Passion, and the thirst of gold
Burn unconsumed? Shall Sloth, and Lust, and Hate,
Crawl in thy realm, and evils mix, as here
Poisons with good, and all things live for ever?
Shall they, whose eyes are full of tears that spring
From their despairs, go weeping in thy world?
Hear me, O Great One, shall the woes that wear
Daily the heart like slow, cold waterdrops,

Till neither love, nor hope, nor thought remains,
Put forth young flowers again? How can they live,
More than the lilies and the violets can,
Whose roots are stricken by a lingering frost?"

Again Death answer'd, glorious as a God:
"Ofttimes the wandering eye, that seems a star
Of mirth, is but the sickly light that flits
Over a grave—the dead heart where no peace
Remains—or rude heart overgrown with weeds—
A wilderness that knows not its own wealth.
Oft too, on thy poor earth, the face ye see
Wintry with care, the eye a mist of tears,
The cheek grey with afflictions, and the lips
Writhen with anguish, oftentimes are a veil
That hides a spirit, radiant with sweet thoughts,
And phantasies of beauty; one that breathes
Auras from Heaven, unwithering paradises,
And hears the voices of the blessed Gods,
And music manifold, and feels his own
Melt in pure sympathy with other souls.
Vain shows shall cease in the Eternal world,
And that which is not shall not seem to be,
Nor that which is, be hidden in a cloud.
Evil shall mate with evil, good with good.
The plant that might not flourish on the earth
Shall put forth flower and fruitage; and the weeds,
That pluck them downwards, shall be rooted out.
Blossoms, whose honey poisons, shall be changed
To the fair growths of Wisdom and of Love;

Or, if their leaves be barren of all use,
Thro' the great Æons of the Eternal Life,
Shall be transformed, ev'n as the Body is,
With silent atom upon atom laid
Momently, till the wondrous whole is new !
And nothing shall be lost, but what is Nought,
Evil—the Shade forsaken of the Sun—
But henceforth to be kindled, and to shine
In noonday splendours of the Sun of Love,
The Zenith light, that leaves no room for shade !”
Then spake I once again to Death, and said—
“ And Thou, O Great One, wilt not take away
My spirit-wealth ? Thou wilt not drown it all
In the oblivion of undreaming Nought,
The pictures, and sweet phantasies, that were
Our consolations, like pure draughts of wine
To weary hearts of sorrow-laden men ?”
Again Death answer'd glorious as a God—
“ Lo ! I, Death's Self, I make them living-true !
This robe of Nature is but as a cloud
By which the Sun is hid—a prison-house,
Whence I will lead thee, through empyreal gates,
Into bright daylight, and sweet air—Come to me :
For I will fill thee with the enduring strength,
And robe thee with the everlasting Youth,
That may not live on Earth, and lead thee up
The steps of the great stair of that New World,
Which takes its forms and colours from the loves
Of the inner Will, that Giant, while on earth,

Fetter'd in chains of heaviness and pain ;
Else would he leap forth and delight all eyes
With godlike magic, swaying his swift slaves
Of the material elements, as fire
Will solve and mingle, mould and change, but faster
Than lightnings work, for Thought shall be that fire,
And, as a picture, which the enamour'd eyes
Of some rare painter, have, through eager years
And earnest, wrought up to be wonderful ;
Though he must needs work, with the means he hath,
The dust o' the earth, what hath no life at all,
And having done this, he can do no more.
And this poor image, faintly setting forth
The outward life of Nature, faintlier still
The burning essence of his inmost soul,
Still, still, however feeble, is a shadow
Of that same essence. So the outward forms
Of the Immortal Life, shall paint and shape
The inner spirit; but with perfect Art,
A glorious beauty unimaginable,
By other than the Artist's self ; for He
The sovran Genius, the All-powerful,
Is the Soul's self ; the picture to be drawn
The image of that Soul ; and without hand
The mighty work shall be accomplished.
The cloth, the pencil, and the colours are
The plastic substance of this wondrous World,
Obedient to the Spirit, as the clay
Follows the moulder's touch.

Know thou, O Man,
Thy heart's desire shall blossom in my clime.
The soul's own image shall be changed into
A visible form of Beauty, and the Love,
So often baffled, crost, and frozen here,
Expand and feed upon the blessedness
Of the affections of the Eternal Life,
Hope, Rapture, Peace and Concord evermore !
Without, the glory of a Universe
That to the Senses represents the Soul !”
And that great Voice seem'd in mine ears to fill
The infinite of Space ; that sunlike face
Illumined all the deeps of my despair
With knowledge clear as noonday, without fear.
I rose, I cried with a triumphant voice,
“ O Death, Death, Death, whom I have fear'd so much,
Whose very name was torture, whom I clothed
By stripping of all beauty, leaving nought
But eyeless sockets, and but fleshless bones,
Come, come to me, and let me see thee now
In that diviner Beauty, which thou art,
That peerless Youth, more youthful every day.
Come, Thou, who wert an icewind to my soul,
And thou shalt be as sweet airs of the spring.
For now I know thou bringest all things good,
Glory, and Power, and Gladness ! Now I know thee ! ”

XVI

Ev'n while I thought He spoke, and seem'd to hear
My own voice answer, I awoke—awoke !
Wonder of wonders ! on the bed I lay,
The Life-elixir in my hand ! The steam,
Breathed from the aromatic waters, clomb
Still fervid to the chamber's marble dome.
The waters of the bath, whence I had risen
Behold ! still sway'd and quiver'd in the light,
And the last drops of the enchanted drink
Rain'd on the floor from the inverted cup.
Yes, all that magical new spring of life,
The pains, the fleeting joys of all those years
Were huddled—like the steam-clouds round my head
Into a drop of water—into one
Brief second. Kingly Phantasy had yoked
Unto his winged car both Space and Time,
And lash'd them on so fast, they were not seen.
It was as though a lip-blown bubble swell'd
Into a world, and show'd upon its orb
A web of wondrous colours, and then burst
And vanish'd. Verily, verily, she had
Renew'd my Youth ; her mighty drugs had work'd,
Not on the frame, but on the soul within.
The knowledge I had gain'd may serve for others ;
The Fates are wiser than the wisest man.
Dark doubts, and vain regrets, and frantic fears
May learn from me to doubt and fear themselves,

And know that knowledge comes, that Life begins,
When mortals think it is extinguished,
As the new sun is soaring in the east,
While all is dread and dark where he went down.
The Gods apportion to each man his days,
With their fix'd shares of sorrow and of joy,
Not to outrun the common span of life,
And parallel to theirs, his fellowmen
Born in the selfsame year. All other measure
Dealt to him, would bring sorrow without balm,
And so would wrong him. Oh! if he might dwell
For ever in this tabernacle of Time,
If no faint-heartedness, no shadow fell
On him, no wrinkle crost his marble brow ;
If the warm blood of radiant endless Youth
Throbb'd in his veins. All this would only be
The lifeless sunshine of a winterday,
The death-cold glories of an icicle ;
While the sad spirit, or the Man himself,
Could hope, and love, and feel, and know no more,
Abandon'd on the desert sands of Time,
And toward the great deep of the Unknown
Gazing in vain. All this return'd to me,
As I lay languidly upon the bed.
And soon I saw sad faces bending o'er me ;
Medea, Jason, nearest to me leant ;
Alcimeda was there—she was not dead—
But weeping for me, as I wept for her ;
Behind, dusk aspects of a muffled crowd

Peeping and muttering ; and their voices came
Like faint sea-murinurs borne off by the wind,
Fainter each moment ; then I heard no more ;
Again a twilight gather'd on my sense—
My vision darken'd—darken'd—for a while
This world and that beyond it were a void.
But what is this ? another light, a dawn !
With sound of other voices. What ! my sire,
My grandsire, as I best remember ye,
O Cretheus, O Salmoneus, are ye there ?
And thou, my mother, with the loving smile
I best remember of all things on earth,
And in that lovely youth I first beheld ?
And ye too, friends, long-lost, beloved ones,
Heroes, that were my comrades, faithful hearts,
Do ye stand there to welcome me again ?
Then welcome, Death, for thou art Life indeed !

KING ATHAMAS

PART I

I

GREAT halls, whose doors, flung open to the sea,
All day drink in its freshness and its sounds,
And multiply its echoes ; whence the eye
Wanders o'er steepy isle, and sunlit crests
Of Summer waters, gold, and blue, and green ;
Or the ear hears the surges, lash'd to rage
By mountain blasts, that bear the surf inland,
Like snowflakes ; whence is seen the thundercloud
Wrapping the nearer headlands in its gloom,
Breathing grey twilights o'er the golden shores.
But far away are leaping in the light
The many-colour'd deeps, whose dazzling sprays
Scale, like lithe giants, many a splinter'd peak,
And fall back howling, and yet so far off,
Only the eye can reach it, not the ear.
Here sits King Athamas this gloomy morn ;
For the sun shines not, and the winds are still,
All but the wailing gusts that shake the gates,
And wave the curtains wildly ; and his eye
Looks on the dark sea as a clouded star,

That soon shall set in darkness. Then he said :
“ Behold I am a King, a God on earth,
And yet the slave of slaves ; for do not fears
Rule over Kings themselves ? although I bid,
And am obey'd, and I can do to death,
And none gainsay. From lowly cupbearers
On bended knee I take the noblest blood
Of this fair land in golden chalice, wrought
With cunning shapes, and rough with gems ; I shout,
And captains tremble ; I am glad, I laugh,
And all the world feels as if the great sun,
Cleaving the winter snowcloud, warm'd the earth
With sudden summer ! What is that to me,
If I am sad myself, as yon great peak
For ever frozen ? Yet from yonder fall
Into the valleys blessed streams, that shed
Abundance : but my eyes have shed their tears ;
And when that rain of tenderness is o'er,
Ah me ! what next ? but death or madness, both
It may be. O agony ! to think of bliss
Which was, and shall not be again for ever !
Young hope, young love, young loveliness, all mine,
And power to burn all incense of delights
To please her whom I loved ; that fill'd the hours,
As garden nooks are fill'd with breath of flowers.
And all is Vanity ! it is to-day,”
He sigh'd, “ I married her—ten years ago—
My early love was dead ; or fled away
And none knew whither, for she could not die.

For was she not a daughter of the Gods,
Perfect in stature as the Immortals are,
Perfect in wisdom too? Oh, she was good
As fair, and those dear children have her eyes,
And the heart-love which lit them. Oh, ten years!
Could we but know what ten brief years can do!
Might wish to die before we stept into
Its fringe of gloom! I knew a happy man;
He had this world's wealth, and a jocund heart;
His wife was fair, his children fair and strong:
But in the first year came a pestilence,
And pluck'd the firstborn; in the next a fire
Left of his goodly dwelling but the walls,
And in the burning gulf were swallow'd up
Twain others as they ran with naked feet
Over the crumbling beams; a third beheld
The lean earth gape beneath the cruel sun,
And the great promise of a lordly spring
Sicken like a frail child; and, harvest failing,
And vintage, hunger seized them, and then death,
Till but the mother and the father lived
To weep in the lone silence of their house.
And in the last year of the fatal ten,
She call'd to him one frozen wintermorn
About the dawn; and, as he look'd on her,
He saw that she was dead! 'Tis strange,' he said—
For pity moved me to behold the man,
And talk with him, and know his heart—'tis strange
How, in that silent moment, all the past

Of those ten years rose, like a dream of life
To drowning men ; and I could see the day
When we were gather'd under the great vine
One Autumn eve rejoicing, and their lips,
Stain'd with new wine, ran off with songs of mirth,
And every note of their triumphant tongues
Stirr'd in mine ears, as I beheld her lie
Cold, deaf, and dumb, my first love and my last !
I could not weep, for I had drain'd till dry
The spring of tears : but when I see a boy,
A merry maid ; and when I hear them say,
In ten years I shall be a man, a chief,
A conqueror ; in ten years I shall be wed
To one who shall inherit oil and wine,
And slopes of yellow grain, and gems, and gold,
Ten years agone, dear children, I would say,
I was all that ye ever wish to be.
What am I now ? a poorer man than ye,
Tho' ye should never taste your heart's desire.
Such as my grief, all blisses may become.
Better a crownless than discrowned king ;
Better a barren hope, than memory sere,
So be ye wise, not wanton ; think on me !
'Twas no harsh wish to slake their innocent,
And happy forecasts in these tears of mine,
That made me tell of them ; but that it was
My lullaby to listen to myself.
And well I knew the glory of their youth
Made rainbows on the dark cloud of mine ills.'

II

"Blest wert thou, O my first, my heavenborn mate !
Blest wert thou, Nephele ; had I listen'd to thee
I had been shielded against ill, and saved
From all misdeeds. O Hera, wherefore wed
A mortal man, although he be a king,
To an immortal ? We were strangely match'd ;
And her wing'd spirit, far outspeeding mine,
Left me for ever humbled ; so at length
Moody self-love, and lack of sympathy
Estranged my heart from hers. I was not wise
As she was, though in truth her lord and king.
I could not brook, that, as an oracle,
She should o'errule my cherish'd purposes,
My fondest hopes, as tho' they were a child's,
And thwart my follies with a smiling calm.
So, when my love grew cold, I turn'd mine eyes
On the fair daughter of a mortal man,
And thought I saw in her—across whose face
Sunshine, and shadows of humanity
Follow'd each other, prides, and angers broken
By laughter, or by tears—a beauty more
Akin to nature, and her outward shows ;
And, in the voices of her many moods,
A music echoing sweeter in frail hearts,
Than that low tongue, tuned to the selfsame mode
Of calm selfrule, and peaceful tenderness.
Tho' now I know, when knowledge is in vain,

That noble heart was pure of earthly ill,
And nearer to that heaven from whence she came,
As mountain summits, clear of thundercloud,
Soar thro' the sunny deeps, and windless air.
Tho' now I know that every word of hers,
If plain, was true as unwrought silver ; all
Her counsels, given in compass of brief speech,
Precious, and weighty, as a little gold
Unburnish'd by the side of polish'd brass.
And, had I listen'd to her, that sweet voice
Had stay'd the pillars of this fallen house,
Which storms of hate and pride have beaten down.
But when I look'd on Ino all my heart
Was changed within me ; and I only sought
For means to compass my delights, and give
Colour of reason to my dark resolve,
Harbour'd against the guileless, guiltless queen
Out of my passion and my purpose grew
Occasion ; for, tho' Nephele's pure heart
Cherish'd no evil, 'twas an oracle
That answer'd quickly her clear-sighted eyes ;
And in her anguish she was heard and seen
By subtle watchers, working on my side,
To commune with herself in the dead night
When all was still, and utter such deep words
As, without meaning to their crafty hearts,
They twisted into folly. Once indeed,
Her arms uplifted and her eyes to heaven,
She pleaded piteously, until her voice

Rose like a doleful chant ; and when she ceased
She smote herself, and fell as without life.

‘Ofttimes,’ they said, ‘we have beheld her thus ;’
Tho’ ‘twas but once her broken heart—a harp
Of golden chords, now shatter’d—in its woe
Gave forth such wailings ; but their wicked words
Sown in my heart bore fruit of evil thoughts.

‘If this be so,’ I said, ‘it needs must be
That I do put her from me, she is mad !’
There was no need, for when she knew the worst,
Whether her lone prayer had moved the Gods
To aid her, or her anger and disdain
Had given her wings, I knew not, but no more
They saw her weeping in her bower, no more
By night in the rose-gardens like a ghost
By moonlight, and I never saw her more.

III

“It seem’d as though a thousand years had roll’d
O’er me ; it seem’d as though I stood behind
The tumults and the changes of a life,
And look’d back to another state of being,
A blissful calm, pure heaven of peacefulness,
Lovedays, and lovedays following one another,
One long sunshiny summer. Oh ! there came
A change, a storm, an earthquake in one hour !
My golden palace of delights was thrown
Down, and my hopes were scatter’d, like the leaves

Torn off while they are green ; a day of doom,
A day of darkness, and of horrors, such,
That still my soul is overshadow'd by it !
Ah me ! ah me ! what is it I have done ?
Once had I wife and children ; once I saw
Their innocent faces, like the flowers at morn,
Come to my bedside, and look up at me ;
Their beauty, and their artless babble were
Mine evening music, better than all songs,
And more beloved for their mother's sake
Who left them to me, and was seen no more ;
Whom death struck, as snow-winds the first pale rose.
And in their eyes I saw their mother's own,
Her silver-sweet tones trembled on their tongues.
But when, alas ! I took another wife,
Though Ino's sons were loved for Ino's sake,
Ino loved not Nephele's for mine,
As well as for their own. Alas ! alas !
Now am I widow'd and bereaved of all !
She loved not my sweet sons ; her cruel eyes
Scowl'd on them till they wept ; but when her own
Were born to her, she cherish'd them, as blooms
Screen'd from the March-wind, tender precious flowers.
Her voice to them was toned to the full tune
Of tenderness ; but oh ! to their half-brothers,
Sharp as a knife with scorn, or set with teeth
Of snarls, and sneers, as 'twere a saw, her tongue
Rail'd on them ; but how could I ever dream
That such a chilling change could fall upon her !

Who, ere she wedded me, look'd on the boys
 As tho' they were her own, as proud of them ;
 She praised their grace and prowess, and their trust
 In her was perfect faith ; ah ! then I said,
 'Tis well she hath a heart so fond, and gentle ;
 Stepmothers mostly are a cruel race,
 And, like the spiked aloe-plant, they bear
 A rose of love once in an hundred years.
 But from so kind a heart no ill shall spring,
 But a new joy shall fill the house with light ;
 All hearts together shall beat unison,
 The sorrow for the dear lost mother change
 Thro' daily consolation to the love
 Of this their second loving as the first.'

IV

"And, as I sat one melancholy eve,
 Lone in my hall, nursing within my heart
 My wrongs, that nest of serpents, torn with pangs
 Incurable, that they who knew my love
 Shared equally among them, turn'd the warmth
 Of that—their sun—my love to bitterness,
 And for sweet fruits grew poisons. Oh, what hell
 Is worse than one cold hearth, one ruin'd home,
 Frozen with scorns, or set on fire with hate,
 That shoots forth venom'd arrows every day
 Fatal to Nature ? Should not kindred hearts,
 Alike, yet differing, as the red rose

And white, that make the self-same garden-plot
Fairer than either would without the other,
Tune such pure harmony from blended thoughts,
And heart-affections, as would make a world
Of one small chamber, and Elysium
Out of a poor man's cot? My column'd halls,
Hung with their golden lamps, and echoing oft
To harp and song, and words that wing'd to heaven
High deeds, and holy, might as well give back
The hissing of the Furies; for the peace,
That comes of love alone, cannot be won—
Though it be woo'd by many-voiced Arts—
Where Love is not to meet them at the door.

V

“ A sudden change swept over earth and heaven.
The sky grew dark, the thunder roll'd, the winds
Shouted against the thunder, and I heard
The sea mix in the dreadful harmony,
Vast as the lamentation of a world!
All seem'd but echo to my inmost mood
Of darkness; and a sort of fatal joy,
Blazed up within me, and got hold of me
Amid the whirl of Nature. ‘ Howl! and hiss,
I cried, ‘ ye tongues of the Eumenides!
I hear ye striding to me in the dark,
Ye awful Three; faster, ay, faster come!
And I will clasp ye to my anguish'd heart,

Fit resting place for ye ! See if your brows
Will cool, if laid upon its burning throes !
Let agonizing Nature raise her voice
And chorus my afflictions ! let the winds,
Earthquakes, and bursting fires, shake and consume
This gloomy pile ! and leave no record of it
But dust and ashes ! Better that this home
Of Kings—whom hitherto the Gods have loved—
Should fall, and its inhabitants should die,
And pass to silence and oblivion,
Than blot the sun with curses and with sighs,
And waken echoes but of hate and fear !'
Ev'n as I shouted in the clang ing hall,
A mighty blast of wind burst back the doors,
And the great curtains, from the threshold hung,
Blew inward, and a blinding lightning flash
Seem'd to set fire ev'n to the marble walls ;
And then the thunder follow'd, with a sound
As if a hundred citadels had fallen
Down from the mountain tops ! I look'd beyond
The portal, through whose yawning void there seem'd
To pour a flood of fire unquenchable.
I saw rush forward from the vast of night
Black and gigantic shapes, with streaming hair,
And lifted arms ! bearing great torches up,
Whose flames show'd blood red in the lightning-light.
Toward me they ran, with cries that shook the dark,
And drew down answers from the mountain-caves.
And, as they whirl'd in awful dance, and clapt

'Their bony hands, each breathed a breath upon me ;
And in a moment I was changed ! my grief
Turn'd into fury, and my love to hate,
Passive inaction to a sudden might
Of vengeance. Oh ! on whom shall it be wreak'd ?
Little Learchus stood beside my chair ;
He had been near me all that woful night ;
I felt the dear boy clinging to my knees,
And his limbs trembling, and his sobs and tears
Bursting in his affright. I had no pity.
For, as I look'd upon him, he seem'd changed
Into a wild beast of the woods, as I
Myself had changed, and felt within my soul
The sudden raging of a lion's wrath.
I raised him quickly from the floor, I swung him
Thrice round and round me in the air, and dash'd him
Shrieking against the solid wall ; the cries
Ceased, and the frail form quiver'd to the earth,
And the warm blood of that exulting life
In red streams painted on the dead cold stone
The picture of my misery and my sin !
Then suddenly I knew what I had done !
Then I fell prone. There was a deadly hush,
All but the tempest. Then again there came
A wailing, an unutterable plaint ;
And by and by I saw—but could not move—
Women and children, and a crowd pass by
Weeping, for ever weeping. I had no strength
Left in me, only a confused sense

Of moving forms ; I saw them streaming out,
Thro' the open doorway, into the fell night.
Ino it was, her handmaids, and one child,
The one who had fled from me, Melicertes,
The old nurse, and a troop of mourning friends.
Onward they rush'd towards the roaring sea,
Shrieking amid the lightning, while I lay
Stricken and without action. A huge rock,
Not far off overhung the deep, and scowl'd,
With its bent brows for ever threatening it,
To dash down on it ; and I saw that troop
Rush violently to that storm-beaten height.
I heard their cries of anguish and despair ;
I saw their forms far off, arms stretch'd to heaven,
Darkly as 'twere against a wall of fire ;
Then, hurling one last universal cry
Up to the cloudy vault, with one consent
They flung themselves into the boiling gulf !
Then suddenly the tempest ceased ; the wind
Moan'd timorously, nor moon, nor star were seen,
But only blackness, blackness everywhere,
Silence, death, doom ! I saw, and heard no more.
And now I wake again, and know the deeds
That I have done ! I live, I am not slain
By one sharp bolt. I live, who hate my life,
While they are gone, the young and beautiful ;
The Gods have spared the murderer of his kin,
His best beloved ! Now the question is
Shall I live on to weep, to weep, to weep,

From fountains inexhaustible of tears,
Or fountains, that exhausted leave the heart
Dry dust and cinders? or until at length
The never-changing winter of my sorrow
Freezes me to still death? Or shall I fly
To that death now—ev'n now—and follow them?"

VI

Ev'n as he spoke he saw a wondrous sight—
So that he trembled, and rose swiftly up,
Clasping his brows with both hands, and he cried ;
“ What is it? are the Sisters on me again ?
Have not the Gods yet given me back my mind ?
Oh ! what is this I see ! I know they pass'd
Into the flaming midnight ; and I heard
Their death-cry, as they vanished o'er the cliff
Into the deep, whose howling winds and waves
Hush'd it for ever ! ” This was the sight he saw—
Under the open portals of the hall,
Approaching with slow step and downcast eyes,
A veiled company of women pass'd ;
And lo ! 'twas Ino with her damsels there,
The old nurse, and the children ; and she came
Nigh to his chair, and cast her at his feet ;
And, weeping bitterly, with broken voice—
“ O King,” she cried, “ O husband, O best friend,
Whose days were darken'd, and whose heart was torn
By her who should have been thy comforter,
Whose evil mind, whose burning tongue, whose pride,

And envy well-nigh slew thee ; now I thank
The Gods who have restored thee to self-rule,
Resceptred reason, and relit affection,
Without which all dominion were in vain.
Behold thy dear ones ; now, I may unlock
This heart to thee, and thou mayst do with it
Ev'n as thou wilt ; as I submit me now
To the justice and the mercy of a King.
And if thy mercy fail thee in the task,
Yet thou wilt then be just enough to trust
The last words, and the true of her, who tells thee
That all her heart is changed, and in it springs
Fresh feeling, as the green herb after rain,
As fragrant mornings after stormy nights ;
And, whether now she lives, or dies in youth,
That all her heart is changed. Oh yes, this heart
Is changed in all things ; clouds of evil thought
Are lifted from it, and the sun of love
Shines forth, and shall not set for evermore,
Or once again be hidden. If I have sinn'd,
Till thou no more didst know me, or thy sons,
Till thy blank eye look'd dreamily upon us,
And I, a woman, with an evil tongue
Turn'd thee from glorious manhood, such as thine,
To something less than wildbeast of the woods ;
And if my deathful influence has been
To hold thee wrapt in folds of monstrous dream,
For days, and weeks, and months ; trust this, I say ;
That thou, in thy dread resolution, thou

Hast heal'd the fatal heart, and fiery tongue
That wounded thee to death ; whilst thou wert dark,
Light hath come back to me ; whilst thou wert dead,
I have begun to live again. O King !
Pains have brought peace, and weakness hath subdued.
For I beheld thee, who wert just and true,
Foaming out threats of vengeance, with white lips
Clutching at nothing ! with dilated eyes
Staring before thee at the cold white wall,
And, pointing with thy finger, cry—'tis blood.
If I have shed it, she is guilty of it,
And is accurst ! Alas ! I see myself,
I know my sin ; henceforth I am no more
The torch of discord in this kingly house.
Oh ! I have sought in daily sacrifices
The blessed Gods, if they might give thee back
That noble mind, that, but for me, had been
For ever just and merciful ; thro' tears
And sighs, and supplications, this hard heart
Is temper'd and renew'd ; the sense of all
That I have done, brought me an adverse thought
Of all the good I should and might have done ;
And that sweet picture fanciful, not true,
Makes sadder all the dreadful opposite.
Know thou, that now thy children, whose young hearts,
First turn'd to me in fond simplicity,
I had estranged, and set against each other,
Are reconciled ; and their half-brothers' love
To join them as of old ; and in affection

They are so match'd, as fair fresh roses bound
In one gold band. And oh ! I had been blest,
And comforted by such a sight as that,
Hadst thou been by to witness it, as once."

VII

Long, with his bent brows hidden in his hands,
The King sat weeping ; then he slowly raised
His sorrowful pale face, and o'er it swept,
Dread, anguish, desolation, like swift clouds,
Follow'd by piteous love, then hope and peace ;
And last, like to a glorious summer-even,
Sunlike, a radiance of godlike joy.
And then he spoke. "I know not yet aright
If I be dead or living, for I see
Him whom I slew before me ! O dear child,
Come hither to me, let me touch that form,
And feel it is no shadow ; let me know
That I indeed am risen from the dead
With thee ; come, let me kiss that curly head
That I saw crimsoning the floor with drops,
That sooner should have come from my own heart,
Were I not masterless, as is a flame
Driven by the northwind ; let me hear thee speak.
Then whether I be living or be dead,
There shall be no more sorrow." Then the Queen
Led up the timorous brothers to his chair,
And with them bow'd, and claspt his knees ; and they

With eyes of wonder look'd on him their sire,
Whom they thought dead ; and he with wonder look'd
On him, the child, whom surely he had slain.
Yet, there he stood, the bloom upon his face ;
No hair was scathed, no gentle limb was marr'd ;
And then the Queen arose and spoke to him.
“ O King, dear spouse, and risen from the dead,
We found thee stretch'd upon the moonlit floor ;
For the great tempest had flown by, and now
The summer-night was glory ; but ah me !
When the light fell upon thy face, I mark'd
Such hideous tumult had distraught thy soul
As was that hurly-burly to the night,
And left it, as an earthquake leaves the plain
Writhen with throes of torment. Soon came one
Skill'd as a leech, and he said, ‘ See ye not
The King is smit with phrenzy, not with death,
And he hath need of syrups, and of calm ?
Bear him up to his chamber ’ : and I cried,
‘ If he shall die, alas ! if he be dead,
The pains I dealt him will fall back on me
In endless retribution, and avenge
Out of myself the woes that he hath borne ;
And I shall know, when knowledge is in vain,
All the true heart that I have scorn'd and lost.’

VIII

“ O King, three days in slumber of deep trance,
Thou layest, hush'd and pale as very Death.

Sometimes I saw thee move thy lips, sometimes
Shadows of fear and sorrow came and went
Across thy face and forehead, and thy hands
Were lifted in affright ; anon they seem'd
Folded in supplication. 'Oh !' I cried,
' He lives, he lives, altho' with sealed eyes
And with mute lips, and ears that cannot hear,
He senses not the motions of this world.
His body lieth there ; where is the soul
That hath no strength to raise that body up,
More than if 'twere another's ?' In thine ears
I shriek'd despairingly ; thou didst not hear.
I spoke, thou didst not answer ; in mine arms
I claspt thee, and thou didst not feel ! thy limbs
Seem'd all so dead to sensibility,
That had a sharp sword pierced thy heart, in truth,
As evil tongues, alas ! had done before,
Thou hadst not known it." " Be thou comforted,
O wife," he answer'd, " all things are forgiven ;
Be they no more remember'd. Oftentimes
Thou mayst have noted that, in converse with thee,
Talking of the weird things of sleep, I said,
Do the Gods show us coming things in dream
And vision ; pointing in dark symbolisms,
Or lovely imagery the Good or Ill,
Done or yet to be done ? We know not all.
Yet sometimes I do think that we must bear
A twofold life, one in this world of Space,
And Time, the other in some inner realm,

Where miracles, or what to us are such,
Are universal laws, not singular.
What if it be that, when the sun is set,
Is given us thus occasion to behold
The state we shall inherit after death,
Once every day, that no man may forget ?
Lo ! when the outer sense is bound in sleep,
The gates of Nature, shut and barr'd unto us,
The body prostrate, and we know no more,
If we possess it, than if it were dead,
How is it that oftentimes there are reveal'd
Glories, and wonders past imagining,
Strange sympathies are touch'd, and states unfold,
And beauty unforeknown to ear or eye ?
And, tho' the sun of this world be gone down,
And the sense shut in gloom, another sun
Rises within us, other fields and flowers,
Gardens, and woods, and waters stretch before us,
Faces, and forms, and voices come and go ?
A subtler spirit quivers in my frame,
I laugh, I weep with a diviner joy,
And a more dreadful sorrow than belongs
To wakeful moments, and, when I awake,
The awaken'd conscience thro' the sun-bright day
Mirrors the awful influences of night,
As though, in that mysterious swoon of Nature,
A window had been open'd far within
To the Infinite ; as when, at earthly break
Of day, a sick man casts his lattice back,

To look upon the ascending light, and breathe
The keen inspiring auras of the dawn.
It seems that, for a moment, I have breathed
The immortal Life ! and yet I had not died !
And all the following day, and many days,
The magic memory of such dreams becomes
As a new sense, subliming, terrifying,
Appalling, or enrapturing with joy,
A quicker life, not to be borne by man
For long, the pulses of an inner being
Half-heard at moments thro' the closed doors,
Behind the walls of Space, and chains of Time !
And now I tell ye something more than Dream
Or Phantasy ; 'twas Vision ! I have been
In a new World, led by what hand I know not,
A world of wonder and of dread ! a world
So full of terror that to reawake,
Even in this sad house, is welcome change,
And to bear all the evil done to me,
Than do to others evil ; better so
Than to confront the living hosts of them
Who died in wrong, and hail us as their kin
Who follow them in evil—for I tell ye
That evil dies not with the flesh and bones ;
But, when we put on the Immortal Life,
Follows us—I have learnt from all I saw,
And heard, that Life, once given to man, remains
A boon for aye ; no sooner flows the breath
From forth the worn frame of Mortality,

Ev'n ere the funeral trumpet wails, before
The flowers are scatter'd, he is there alive,
And, whether he be evil or be good,
Reknit with everlasting youth and might,
To work more Good or Evil ; scarce believes he
That he is pass'd from earth ; for round him lie
Familiar sights, and steadfast as this world
The earth he treads, and, as this arching dome
Of azure, the vast heaven above his head.

PART II

I

“ Long after I had fall'n with that great cry,
Oblivion, with deep darkness, compass'd me.
After a while a faint light, as the moon
Thro' foggy air, gleam'd onward. By and by
Great glory shone and shatter'd all the mist.
And I beheld anear me one, a son
Of the great Gods ; and pitifully he
Bent over me, and raised me by the hands
My eyes were open'd, and I heard a voice
Speaking to me lowly and tenderly :—
‘ O brother in Humanity, thy pains
Are known to us, thy sighs and tears, thy life
Afflicted, thine affections pierced and torn,
That drove thee on to madness and to blood,
Unheeding on whose head the vengeance fell,
Though it were on the lives most dear to thee,

Thine own beloved children : lo ! I show thee,
A mystery, that hereafter shall unfold
To all men's knowledge—but Time is not yet—
My mission now is to reveal to thee
The state of them, whose wild misgovern'd will,
Whose lawless lusts have sunder'd them for ever
From good of life, and from God-fearing men.
'Tis not one deed, one act of evil, wash'd
With bitter tears, and overlaid with acts
Of mercy healing twofold, that will bring
The soul of that man hither. Thou hast dared
To shed blood, and what blood ! blood of thy son !
Therefore art thou brought hither to behold
The end of them who, as the lion tastes
Blood once, and to that thirst returns, renew
Their evils daily, till in dreams by night,
And morn-awaken'd hopes, they still delight
To ponder evil, and the means to do.
Here Pride, and Avarice, and Hypocrisy
Unmask themselves ; for none are hidden here,
Ev'n tho' the mountains hide them ; what is done
In secret is proclaim'd, the crime, the wrong
Escapes not ; Justice binds him hand and foot
Keener than earthly eyes, and mightier
Than earthly arms : and surely as the hand
Thrust in the fire is burnt, surely as poison
Swallow'd is deadly, Right, assail'd by Wrong,
Shoots at the heart of his great enemy
The venom'd point of violated Law.

And they, whose ills began on earth, and grew
Into gigantic shadows tyrannous,
Know now full well that, when they choose their ills,
They cannot shun the Avengers. Here they know
That the deceitful are deceived, the proud
Abased, the unmerciful await
No mercy, but the sharp and sudden blow,
The timely punishment, that saves the wretch
From other and worse wrong—first done to others
And so unto himself—And yet, such might
Sinews old custom, long in arms, ev'n now
What they have done they will do, and the Good
They have abhor'd they ever will abhor !
For when the evil of the heart is wrought—
The conscience slumbering till it wakes no more—
Day after day in outward act, it seems
Time slowly closes every door of Life,
Ev'n as perennial waters, bearing on
The flinty unseen atoms, change at length
A lovely breathing flower into a stone.
And if the evil spirit, ere it fly
Forth from the mortal dwelling, for awhile
Drowses beneath the burthen of old age,
No sooner is vitality renew'd
With twofold life, than it desires again
To live the hateful, yet beloved past ;
And, like a giant after slumber, wakes
To double strength at morn. But, whatsoe'er
The madness be that rouses into might,

It hath to strive with Evil here, not Good,
 And takes back the same arrow that it flings.'
 Ere he had finish'd, all my manhood shook,
 My anguish broke in stormy tears, my soul
 Was rack'd with agonies unspeakable,
 At thought of my misdeeds : and then I knew
 That, when the spirit is unclothed, it feels
 Tenfold the misery that it felt before ;
 As when, by reason of an evil dream,
 Terror is strengthless, and the will is vain,
 And we cannot escape. But he said, 'Come,
 Arise, and follow :'

II

" And, while he forward pass'd,
 The mists roll'd off before me, and I saw
 Myself, as 'twere once more upon the Earth.
 Here were, methought, the well-beloved hills,
 The mountains of my native Land ; I saw
 The selfsame joyous sun, and azure sea :
 The winds blew softly, and the air was fill'd
 With songbirds, and the summer slopes were waving
 With corn, and vine, and olive ; and they curl'd
 Fast and radiantly before the breath
 Of morning ; and I laugh'd out at the sight,
 For I was glad. But the Immortal said ;
 ' Dream not this world to be the Earth of Nature ;
 This is that Hades by thy Poets sung,

Thy Priests foreshown ; and hither all have pass'd,
The mighty, and the lowly, rich, and poor,
The simple, and the sage, and king and slave,
Conqueror and captive here have met together.
But know they dwell not here as thou hast dreamt ;
There are no abiding cities for them here.
They live not here, as thou hast fondly thought,
On memories sad or sweet of Time, or lean
On violet slopes, to breathe the sunset airs,
Witching the hours with harp and voice, with songs
Of high heroic deeds, and loves of old,
Or twine the amaranth, and the asphodel
For garlands, quaffing of the golden wine,
Taking their everlasting rest, as 'twere
A summer dream. Far other is their lot ;
As the Earth traveller stays by the wayside,
A little while to drink the spring ; or rests
Beneath the planetree by the river-shore ;
Or slumbers in the cool of pleached vine ;
Then starts up suddenly, and swiftly parts,
And vanishes into the dusty cloud
Of the down-trodden way ; those who come here
Fare onward without ceasing ; and thou too
Wilt come here in thy season, but not yet,
For thou hast work to do, not as a King
Only, a chief of men, a Lawgiver
To others, but as ruler o'er thyself,
Within the proper realm of thine own soul ;
That henceforth thou mayst be in all things fit

For the last voyage. And now behold,' he said,
As from the crest of a high hill we gazed
Down on the wide-spread champaign fringed with green
Uplands, with woods and waters girt behind
By the great mountain towers, some bathed in floods
Of glorious unimaginable light,
And others dark with shadows terrible,
That hung o'er darker valleys far within.
And lo ! along the middle of the plain
Ran a broad road, whereon a motley crowd,
A multitude unnumber'd held their way.
Chariots, and horses, piles of sumless wealth,
Vast herds of sheep and oxen—so they seem'd—
Chequer'd with sun and shadow moved along.
Huge was the tumult blown up on the wind
From that great multitude, all, as it seem'd,
Travelling the selfsame way. I heard the sound
Of shouting, and of conflict here and there,
Sudden and fierce, soon hid in dusty cloud ;
None turn'd back, all went forward rapidly.
And we went down and join'd ourselves to them ;
But they beheld us not, for o'er their eyes
The Immortal One with me had cast a veil.
How shall I tell the wonders of that way,
Whereon I saw all Nations of the Earth
Move swiftly onward, like a host pursued,
Each laden with the wealth it loved the most,
Indian, Persian, and Sarmatian,
Egyptian and Assyrian ; and their robes

Diverse, and many-colour'd, took the sun
Of morn, and gleam'd, and flutter'd ; and I heard
A sound of songs at intervals, between
The clash of arms, and the shrill notes of war ;
With hymns of triumph, lamentations, fears.
Some, weary of their burthens, cast them down
Midway, and bounded forward with a strength
Unfelt till then, and shouted and rejoiced.
Others, tho' worn and footsore, earthward bent
Their eyes, with semblance of humility
That inly burn'd with a dull fire of pride,
And, well-nigh fainting with the load they bore,
Cast it not by ; and, ever and anon,
Were lifted up above all lesser sounds
Laughter of scorn, with frantic shrieks, that died
In shuddering groans. And, as we wended on,
I mark'd that many, who had throng'd together
In silence, and as strangers to each other,
Were parted into lesser companies,
Drawn together by a word, a look,
A smile of sympathy ; and for a while
These separate bands were held in willing bonds
Of mutual love, and ministry : the most
Again divided, and was heard a cry
Full oft, 'Thou art not of us ;' or, again,
' My soul is weary of ye ;' and I saw
The outcasts fly to other fellowships ;
Till, after many changes, each one found
Them he delighted in. And then I heard

Choral songs, of such perfect harmony
As breathed of soul-affections : there were some
Who, after many trials, could find none
To comfort them, and sat down by the way,
Weary and worn ; and it was found that these,
Who linger'd thus, still hid within their vests
Clasp'd to their hearts the treasures that their friends
Had cast away ; and, as they flock'd together,
They wonder'd that they had not sought each other,
And yet had found ; and then they rose together,
A mighty host, and took the onward way.
And yet, though all these—each of his free will—
Chose the same way, no sympathetic spell
Drew them together, and no welcome words
Were utter'd by them ; only mutter'd wrath,
And threatening frowns, and eyes that gleam'd askance
Suspicious dread, or wakeful craft ; for each,
Ruled by self-love and pride, shut up his heart
Against his neighbour, and no spark of love
Kindled between them ; and a gathering gloom
Starless, and cold, above them, and around,
Was as the gulf between each sever'd soul.

III

“ And now there came a change ; we reach'd a point
Where the long road divided into two.
One, on the right, ascended sunlit slopes
To golden peaks toward the Orient ;

The left one downward into valleys dark,
O'erhung by craggy steeps, whose crests were lost
In wreathen storm-cloud : and no sooner there,
Than lo ! a sight of wonder ; for, far down
The mountain-sides, another host descending
With trumpets blown, and standards, a bright host
In gold and azure raiment, and with palms.
Soon as the eyes of them, who had flung down
Their burthens by the way, beheld the sight,
Onward they ran lightly, and joyfully ;
And many, who had wept and groan'd full oft,
Along the weary march that brought them there,
Fell on the necks of those bright mountaineers,
Whose aspects, long departed from the earth,
Were still familiar ; unto them were brought,
In crystal bowls by ministering hands,
The fountain-waters of that upper land,
Which gave them strength and joy for the ascent.
Again we wended onward for a while.
And then I look'd back toward that mountain-land ;
And lo ! far off, above the dusky host,
Above the valley's cloudy wall, I saw,
Gather'd on high, the happy brotherhood
Of them who cast their burthens by the way,
And follow'd the Immortals clad in gold
And azure, whose unnumber'd godlike forms
Flash'd back the sunfire from their diadems ;
And heard the tempest of their hymned joy,
As they pass'd on amid the golden mists

Of Morning : and scarce had I time to sigh
My deep regrets, my woful state, when he
My leader bad me follow. ‘Mortal Man !’
He said, ‘thy burthen sinks thee ; gaze not up ;
Blind not thine eyes, thou canst not follow them ;
Easier the downward slope than to ascend.
But thou must go back to thine earthly sun,
Thine earthly home ; when years have worn thy frame,
Have strung thy soul, thy reascent from Time
Shall find thee fitter to cast off thy load,
And, without fear, or shame, or sorrow, wait
The loving welcome of Immortal friends.
And, if thou treadest now the fatal road,
It is that thou mayst never tread it more.
Follow, and fear not to look on the men
Who living had no fear, or love, and now
Have lost that hope that led them thro’ the World,
To feast on Evils without pain ; to deal
Out curses and be scatheless ; and to slay
And not be slain ; and to be Kings unruled
Of justice, doing Evil, suffering none.’
I wept to turn from that high company
Of happy gods, perfect in strength and joy.
Their glad advent and glorious parting gave
Place to another host, that rose from out
The shadows on the left hand, with uproar
Hoarse as a wintry sea amid the rocks.
Quickly they seized on those who had not flung
Their burthens from them weary with the way,

And took them captive ; and in haste they fled
Down the slope vale into the growing glooms,
Darkness that grew each moment as they went.
'Lo ! these are they,' said the Immortal one,
'Who, being confirm'd in Evil, have the power
By stronger will to fetter weaker souls :'
And as they pass'd down swiftly into gloom,
We heard the clang, as of great brazen doors
Closing with sound of thunder, rolling through
The void, and echoed in ten thousand tongues.
'O King, 'tis meet we follow where they go,'
Whisper'd my Guide, 'for thou art here for this.'
And, turning down the valley on the left,
We follow'd them in silence and in haste.
Ev'n while he spake, darker and darker grew
The valley dim ; and now I saw it close,
And bar all onward ; and above us rose
What seem'd a portal huge, whose height was lost
In rolling clouds, that glanced at intervals
A lurid lightning, showing momently
Vast gates of knotted adamant. But my guide
Stretch'd forth his hand, and from it sprang a beam,
Before whose strong vitality recoil'd
The impenetrable substance without life,
As though it were a cloud before the sun,
Stilly ; and right before us, on and on,
O'erarch'd with midnight blackness, a slope way,
Illumin'd only by a radiance cast
From far within, that laid beneath our feet

A blood-red glow, as from the open doors
Of sevenfold heated furnace, only hid
At intervals by its own rolling smoke,
That swathed the sombre brightness of the fires,
Leaving us in great darkness, till again
The doleful light flow'd up the dismal way.
Then spake I to the Son of the Great Gods,
In fear and trembling. ‘Bear with me, my Lord,
And deign to answer ; how shall I advance
Further into this fiery realm and live ?
Thou who, by mute command and lifted hand,
Unbarrest gates of adamant, mayst roll back
All peril and all power that might affront
Supremest virtue ; but for such as I,
Less than the beast that have no thirst for blood,
When sated, and no hunger to destroy,
Except when hunger'd, and would spare ev'n man
Their enemy, unless he seek their life ; . . .
For me—‘Fear nothing,’ said my guide ; ‘for all
Thou seest is but a semblance, and thou seest
All that I see by virtue I impart ;
For in the world of spirits higher life
Rules o'er the lower, tho' the lower life
May not approach the higher ; for a while
Thy sense is ev'n as mine.’ And, as he spake,
And we came nearer to the realm of fire,
It seem'd to be extinguish'd, and instead
Darkness, and cold, as from a mountain-peak
Of frozen snows, flow'd round us ; darkness all,

Save round about the footsteps of my guide
Radiant. And, as we pass'd from underneath
The arched sloping way, the gloom of night,
That follow'd after that red glow of fires
Seen afar off, gave place, as he advanced,
To a pale twilight, like to moonshine veil'd
By wintry mist, and all before us lay
A wilderness ; but neither moon, nor star
Made visible that world ; and by and by
What seem'd a city, fashion'd with the art
Of some great capital. And, when my sight
Gat strength to sound the ghastly light, I saw
Soaring into the dimness its grey walls,
Whence came the murmurs of a gathering host,
Clashing of brazen armour, and the sound
Of trumpets. Yet, altho' we stood beneath
The city walls, the voices of the men,
That moved above us swiftly, and all sounds,
Came faintly to our ears, as from beyond
Barriers of mighty mountains, or beneath
Great waters ; and above the piled walls
We could descry pâle architecture, wrought,
As in the cities of my sunny land,
With sculptured pediment, and architrave
Resting on lordly columns of great fanes
And carven palaces. Again he spake,
'Behold, O hapless king, the under world,
Such as it seems to us, and to thy sight
Inform'd by mine ; for not yet is thine hour

To be as they, perchance shall never be,
If, when thou wakest to earth light again,
The memory of this vision shall beget
A better life within thee. Now thou seest
The spiritual substances of all
That on the earth was evil ; here they dwell,
Not, as on earth, the evil with the good,
The one sweet sun for all, and common air,
Each subject to his rule of love or fear ;
But, as on earth the banded enemies
Of order and of law remain apart,
In secret conclave, till the moment dawns
To kill, and overturn, so here below
The immortal enemies of mortal man,
Workers of evil only, are conjoin'd,
Strong, implacable, innumerable,
A mighty commonwealth, whose bond of love—
If love it can be call'd—is common hate
Of things divine and human, in their hearts
Leaving not ev'n the momentary calm
Of him who hath struck down his earthly foe
In battle, or avenged a wrong with blood ;
If peace can e'er be named where war is waged
Betwixt opposing hatreds, each dark host
Serried for this alone, to curse and slay,
Ev'n tho' they know their immortality
For ever bars against their phrenzied ire
That gate of death, welcome to mortal woes ;
And shows them only, through æonian years,

Vain purposes, unutterable pangs,
Renew'd forever, and forever vain ;
Until they curse in their great misery
The God of Gods against whom they rebel.
And He sends fear into their hearts, to bind
Their arms as in a chain ; for only fear
Can stay the evil for a little space,
Until continual anguish breeds at length
Despair, and patience, and that wisdom, born
Of pure self-love, no love of aught beside,
Nor sense of others' ill, or fear to harm.
And yet they seem not to themselves, as now
They show to us, inhabitants of dim,
Grey, wintry wastes, lit up by sombre fires,
That make the dark more desolate—for eyes
Used to the light of heaven behold this world
As darkness—but they love the things they see ;
And the dull fires that have nor heat, nor light—
The outward symbol of their inmost states,
Loves void of Good, and thoughts devoid of Truth—
Seem to their madness better than the *Sun*—
A mighty commonwealth, where equal Law
Deals with the mightiest as with the mean ;
With monarchs, as with slaves ; and with all ill
By counter-ill ; so that the lordliest wills,
Like dark seas tempest-tost, and lifted up,
As tho' to rend the firmament, are stay'd
Within their barriers, nor can surge beyond
Their fixed bounds ; and where all Good is Evil,

And Evil Good—*the Sun of inmost Heaven*—
Which is another name for Love Divine,
That is the Life of all things Good or Ill,
And, as the sun of thine own world dissolves
The icy peaks, and sets the rivers free,
And draws the green herb from the frozen earth,
Melts the hard heart, and draws forth all its good,
And wins to greater good the willing one—
That Sun of Heaven, hid from the hearts of men
By clouds of self-love, and rebellious pride,
Leaves fear, as 'twere a chain of adamant,
Fear only, fear, that—as the sunless sky
Fastens the icepeaks with a deadlier frost,
Locks the free streams, and strikes the earth with death,—
Poisons the lawless heart where no love is ;
Till the proud will is palsied into calm,
As unsunn'd germs are frozen ere their birth.

IV

“‘ And now I take back,’ the Immortal said,
‘ The virtue that I gave thee for a while
To see them as we see. Behold them now,
O King, ev'n as they seem unto themselves.’
And, as he spake, the great gates open'd wide,
And the arm'd host, that throng'd the battlements,
Descending moved into the open space ;
And from the dusk horizon I could see
Another host advancing. Swift as thought

The spectral armies rush'd, and clash'd together ;
And there was war, such as on earth is seen,
And lifted swords, and waving helms, with sounds
Of javelins ringing against brazen plates,
And banners waving : there were cries of pain,
And shrieks and curses, with the show of blood
Purpling the dust. ‘Whatever here thou see’st
Of outward seeming,’ said my guide, ‘is born
Of inmost moods of vengeance, and of hate.
The will, omnipotent o’er its own world
Of spirit substance, fashions all its wants
Into obedient forms of shield and spear,
Corselet, and casque, swifter than all the strength
Of a thousand armourers, by night and day
Toiling o’er fire and anvil ; for ‘tis done,
Swift as the sudden lightning shapes the dark.’
And now the ghastly conflict seem’d to ebb
Far down into the misty waste, beyond
The city walls, and the two armies moved
Against the far horizon. ‘See,’ he said ;
‘These are the spirits of such evil kings
As strove with one another on the earth.
And now they strive as then, and take the lead—
As heretofore over their hapless slaves
On earth—over such banded influences
For evil, as are weaker than their own,
Yet, being evil, bound to the dread will
That is most mighty.’ Again the battle sway’d
Citywards ; but, as the warriors near’d,

It seem'd the strife had ceased, and in its stead
Triumphal cars and trumpets blown, and shouts
Of jubilant disdain, seen in such light
As when the glare of glowing embers falls
Upon a death-pale face ; and after them
The host of the discomfited enchain'd,
Or dragg'd behind their chariots, wherein sat
The conqueror and his chieftains, on each hand
Their cohorts, marching to the sound of rhythms
Attuned to scorn, and with relentless hearts
Breathing a hate more cruel, and a will
More iron to inflict it on their foes
Now taken captive. ‘Mark,’ my leader said,
‘The conquerors’ strength, the weakness of their foes,
Are not, as on the earth, cause and effect
Of strength, or skill subduing opposites,
But mightier wills for evil over less.
He, whom thou seest in the foremost car,
On earth was a great conqueror who shed blood,
Till it became a glory o'er his head,
As when a crimson sunset strikes'against
Dark thunderclouds ; tho’ vengeance cut him off
One night before his time, and by the hand
Of one he trusted, born again to life
Immortal he revived once more to lust
Of power, and that dominion over men
Which, being won by violence, is no more
Sated by power than quenchless feverthirst
By fiery wine.’ Thro’ the colossal gates

Of the Tartarean city roll'd the cars
Trailing their captives, and the banded hosts
Follow'd into the dusk and dreary light.
And by and by we follow'd, till we heard
A shouting from within a domed hall
Rotund, and vast, of polish'd marble, black
And shining as the fabled river, cross'd
By gloomy ghosts. We enter'd, but unseen ;
For he, my guide, had cast before their eyes,
By the sole might of his unspoken will,
A cloud 'twixt us and them : and there he sat,
Whom we had seen returning from the war,
Crowned, and throned, and central over all,
While, circle over circle, round him ranged,
High as the roof, the countless host of those
Who bow'd before him : and he rose and spake.
' Warriors and friends, are we not met together
To celebrate our triumph, and to read
Our glory in the faces of our foes
Fallen, and abject, and to taste the bliss
Of looking down from our imperial seats
Upon the torments we shall deal to them
Who would have dealt them to us ? Is there aught
Lovely as sated vengeance, save the hope
Of other conquests over higher foes,
Till all are cast beneath us, and the Gods
Themselves, who vaunt supremacy, are thrown
Into the lowest dungeons, and we reign
Unrivall'd ? Meanwhile from our capital

Let us send forth our banded legions, strong
In victory, to subdue our lesser foes
On earth, in heaven ; are not our foes on earth
The few, the weak, the fearful ? those who shrink
From conflict, and, because they are but few
Against the host of our incarnate friends,
That are on our side, tho' they know it not,
Prevail no more than can one voice or two
Against the wind and thunder ? When have those,
Who whisper peace on earth, been heard above
The warcries of a thousand years, perchance
Thousands of thousands, in the past, to be
Ten thousand times ten thousand in the years
That shall be, if we faint not ? Shall the kings
Of weak, blind, miserable mortal men,
Were they all wise, as sages are on earth,
Were they all saints, as sages feign to be,
Together with their peoples good and wise,
Strive with the foes they see not, and oppose
The frail and erring willpower to the dream
By night, the passion, eager to receive
The touches of our power and subtle might
By day, that, as a spark, shall set on flame
The kindling soul ? And let us not forget,
If rival hates, that burn between us here,
In this new world of glory without end,
Shape themselves into arms and armour, like
The shields, and spears, and panoplies of old,
We have no need, for victory over man,

Of other weapons than our magic wiles,
Wrought secretly within unconscious souls,
Till hopes, that brood in silence, bring forth act,
As heat, that works in darkness, bursts in flame.
For with such power our cunning magistry
Will rule them that, upon the earth at last,
Its laws of time and space shall forge them arms
Such as we wield at will ; and other arms
They dream not of we shall put in their hands,
Till the whole earth shall be a theatre
For us to look on, war a festal show
With thunders for its music. Let them dream
No more of peace, as tho' 'twere possible.
Let us not dream that any day shall be
When daily thousands from the earth we left,
And still rule over, shall have ceased to swell
The hosts of Hell, and add unto our strength,
Till Heaven itself, outnumber'd and disarm'd,
Shall have no power to breathe into our hearts
A single breath of calm, calm, worse than death
Of total darkness and oblivion, death
Such as we dreamt of once, but fear not now,
Awaken'd unto tenfold life again,
And all the bliss of the delights we love,
And still shall love for ever and for ever !

V

“ “ Yet, ere we crown our triumph with the sight
Of our rack'd prisoners, let us take, O friends,

A moment's pastime, and show forth the might
Of one soul's willpower over many souls.
Come forth,' he cried, 'O Phantasis, who art
In this our realm, as once a bard on earth,
Or a buffoon to make men merriment
At royal banquet-tables.' As he spake,
What seem'd a giant, in a vesture clad
Of many colours, from the shadows rose,
And passed o'er the arena ; wings he had,
Or seem'd to have, and on his eyeballs mirror'd
The changeful shapes of things ; and o'er his face,
Like cloud and sunshine following one another,
Flitted all moods and passions. In his train
I saw a host of those whom he had tamed
To think, and feel, to suffer, and delight,
Ev'n as he might imagine ; and a wand
He bore in his right hand, and with it touch'd
Lightly the brows of them he will'd to move ;
And straightway they were spellbound to obey,
And burn again with passions they had felt,
And act once more the dark deeds they had done.
Witch'd by his magic, they were fain to show—
As in a theatre, in many masks—
The moods that were on earth realities,
The evil joys and sorrows of all Time,
And none dare say, 'I will not : ' and he wrote
On empty nothing fiery words, that flamed
A moment, and then darken'd ; that were read
Swiftly, and then forgotten. Then I heard

Acclaim of many, mingled with despair,
‘Oh, had we but remember’d, we had been
The saviours of the world !’ And these were they,
Who, with fantastic visions while on earth,
Had won upon weak hearts to lift them up
To highest seats of honour, and when they fail’d,
And fell, and were dishonour’d, in despair
They dragg’d their slaves to ruin with themselves ;
And in their wrath they cried, ‘Let us go back
To our first loves ; there is no hope in good,
And live each for himself !’ And they were here.
Anon a troop of young and old came up,
Treading on one another’s heels ; some pass’d
In bridal garments, some in funeral weeds,
As last they had appear’d upon the earth,
And such he will’d that they should seem again.
But, whether clad in sorrow or in joy,
The lying hearts within could not be hid,
For nought is hidden in the bloodless worlds ;
And all who look’d upon them knew at once
That Guile and Greed had wedded Power and Pride,
That woful weeds had mock’d before the world
Some murder’d one whom cruelty had kill’d ;
And they were here. Some out of broken vessels
Drank lordly wine ; but they had robb’d and slain,
And in a drunken revel had been kill’d
Some without hand, and some by one another,
To meet again ; and some from golden bowls,
That seem’d as tho’ pure nectar swam therein,

Quaff'd aconite ; and they were darksome souls,
Whose fears and memories turn'd their sweetest hours
To bitterness ; and they were here together.
And some there were who, thro' their mortal life,
Dream'd of no life beyond mortality,
And joys of Time ; they, with a hundred years
Upon their shoulders, flung their crutches down,
As in the moment when they fell and died
On earth, and shouted, 'Lo ! there is no death,
So let us eat and drink, and dance, and sing,
Said we not that we never could grow old ?
Oh ! Nature is immortal !' Others took
Those crutches up, and, with the flowing hair
Of youth, did wipe away the dew of tears,
That o'er unwrinkled cheeks for ever flow'd,
Wailing, 'There is no hope of joy in Time,
Oh ! that we could cast off this weary frame
And sleep for ever !' So, before their hour,
They sprang thro' the dark gates into the void ;
And so were here together. Others came,
As tho' the ghostly pomp would never end.
Amid a band of crowned heads, that walk'd
Together with sad palsied steps, and look'd
With hateful fear upon the rest, I saw
A poor man who, upon his hungry face,
Received the light that stream'd alike on all,
Singing among those kings, 'I'd liefer be
A careless beggar basking in the sun,
Than the arm'd chief of a distressful land !'

Yet he had slain men, as a king might do,
Fired with the selfsame passions, greed of gain,
Or hunger for revenge ; so he was here.
Some, damn'd unto hoarse mirth, did leap and yell,
Their garments spatter'd with the lees of wine ;
Some gnash'd their teeth with envy and with hate ;
Others did shrink and tremble, and became
Less than the beasts with fear ; some laugh'd, some wept,
Some cried aloud, and clave the vast above
With terror like a sword : some mad with rage
Did with convulsed limbs, and starting eyes
Clutch one another's throats ; and these were men,
Who, on the direful chances of a die,
Had lost or won, and then had striven together
And so were here untimely. I saw a youth,
Led captive by the follies of the world,
Who, had he fed on better hopes, had been
A winged spirit ; but he too was here.
His lawless purpose of adulterous love
Had been betray'd, and he was sick at heart,
As one who fails in doing some great good.
He sat, pale lips apart, and hair astray,
Looking up into heaven, as tho' from thence
Hope would come down again, and make the night
Flash with her presence like a new-born star.
Then suddenly he turn'd upon himself,
And with a dagger drawn, and red with blood,
Watch'd his own heartdrops falling on his hand,
And smiled as when he died. Still others came,

Till all the sin and sorrow of the world
Was shown, to move infernal merriment,
And laughters wild. They pass'd, and all was still.

VI

"Then, with a shout that seem'd to shake the vault,
He cried, 'Bring forth the captives !' and I saw
A long pale pomp of them who were erewhile
Captains and chiefs themselves ; I heard their chains
Ring in the eager silence, that possess'd
Their enemies in that dread interval
Between their acclamation, and that voice
More terrible, that would salute the sight
Of torment and of vengeance. 'Follow me,'
Whisper'd my guide ; and by the arched stair,
That wound throughout the amphitheatre
Up to the topmost seats, we pass'd in haste,
And from a height, that show'd us at a glance
The circles of the whole assembled host
From lowest unto loftiest, we look'd down
Into the vast arena, where the band
Of the tormentors waited but the sign
Of the enthroned Emperor, to unbar
Underground caverns, where great beasts abode,
For ever ready to rush forth and slay
At bidding of the sovran will ; ev'n then
We heard the lions roar, and serpents hiss.
The King arose, and gave a sign ; and lo !

Just as I lean'd to see the monsters huge—
Monsters that were the mere embodiments
Of hates, and angers, and bloodthirsty prides—
Leap forth upon their prey, my Leader spake.
'Henceforth, when evil shadows on the earth
Deepen to total darkness, men shall see
The things that now we look on ; throned Kings,
Whose hearts imbreathe the effluence from below,
Shall play with murder as a pastime ; hear
The cries of the tormented as it were
Sweet music ; love the sight of writhing pain
Better than love-scenes at a theatre.
And they, who will not fall before their Gods,
Which are men's evils worshipp'd by themselves,
Shall be thrown to the lions ; and the hearts
Of women shall so harden they shall smile
To see men slain to furnish them with sport,
And shed their blood by moving of a hand !
And so the spirits here, that feed on wrath
Mingling with mortal evil, shall draw down
The greater part of men unto themselves,
And so enlarge the bounds of Hell, that Heaven
Itself shall tremble, and the Lord of all
Himself shall wage the war against his foes
Till they be vanquish'd—but the time is far—
Yet Love and Truth must triumph in the end,
Or Evil conquer Good, which were as vain
As though a shadow should blot out the sun !'
Ere yet his words were ended, I could hear

A murmur, and I look'd around, and saw
The aspect of the mighty multitude
Changed in a moment, and their fearful eyes
Turn upward with a cry, as when the gates
Of some beleaguer'd city are thrown back
At midnight, and the army of the foe
Floods in with fire and sword, and echoed tread,
And wakes the dreamers into life again
With threat of instant death. For what seem'd once
The domed roof had vanish'd, and gave place
Unto a vision so surpassing bright,
So wondrous, that I stood fix'd to the spot
With hush'd lips, and with beating heart. I saw
The black infinity, that yawn'd above,
Ablaze as with a lamp of starry lights
Innumerable, a circle, like a crown
Amid the darkness, that each moment grew
Vaster and brighter, till it rested o'er
The sphere of the Infernals ; and behold
Another army of Immortal Gods,
Whose sphered faces made another roof
To that dread amphitheatre, and turn'd
Its thousand lamps to midnight, and therefrom
Glanced down, as 'twere a star into the gloom,
A spirit, in his beauty like to him
Who stood beside me ; and he stood alone
Upon the void arena, soon to be
Fill'd with the writhing shapes of captives torn
By hungry lions, if the conqueror's will

Had stood a moment proof against the might
Of higher powers. ‘Behold,’ my leader said,
‘All these, whom thou hast look’d on hitherto,
Such as they seem unto themselves to be,
Conquerors, and chiefs, and mighty men, as seen
By the strong spirits above them, who alone
Look down on them, and overrule, and stay
Their madness ere it flame beyond all bound,
And burn up all things ; for, had they the power
Freely to work their will, the earth, and all
Its children in a moment they would rend
Piecemeal, and scatter over the abyss,
As thou hast seen autumnal tempests whirl
The summer dust, and cast it on the sea.’
I turn’d again, ev’n while my leader spake,
Upon the countless multitude, that throng’d
The circles of the amphitheatre,
And, as I look’d, the illumined structure sank
With all it held, until I saw it not ;
But in its place were caverns, that appear’d
Gateways to utter darkness underneath ;
And, for the Kings, and chiefs, and men of war,
I saw the forms of monstrous things, that fled
Tumultuously with howlings and dismay,
Crowding the steps of the broad stairs that wound
Down into nether blackness. ‘These are they,’
He said, ‘who, but a moment past, were seen
By thee as they appear unto themselves.
And now behold them as they seem to us,

Symbols of their own evils, which have power
At will to cast themselves in outward shapes
Of cruelty, when they would wreak their wrath
Upon the weaker vessel they enslave ;
And, at the bidding of the assembled host,
Lions, and wolves, and serpents, for the moment
Wrought magically by concentrated might
Of evil wills converging, would have sprung
Upon the affrighted captives, had not we,
To whom the Highest hath committed power
To rule these realms, and into order bring
Unruly spirits, and set bounds awhile
To madness at its floodtide, stay'd them, ere
They rush'd beyond the limit of their ill
Appointed to them. Now their punishment
Is to endure the wrongs they would have wrought,
In sight of them on whom they would have worked
Their vengeance, who in their turn had incur'd
Erewhile the selfsame agony and shame,
And thus are warn'd by anguish they behold
To bring to mind the wrath they once endured,
To hold from evils that, like arrows shot
Against their foes, are blown back on themselves.
Yet all is vain, for, when the woe is past,
The will awakens, and the fell desire
To torture others with fresh pangs o'erwhelms
All memory of their own, until at length,
After long æons of regather'd wrath
And refluent woe, the unrepentant soul

Waxes in selfish wisdom, and is drawn
To weigh at last in equal balances
The passion and the penalty. And so
A change may pass upon them, bringing on
A palsied peace, perchance oblivion
Of all the past, and in that neutral state
The spirit may be fed by better thoughts,
By little and by little, as a child
After a fever, or a drowned man
Restored to life : and this I tell thee now
As from myself ; it may be, or may not ;
We know not all things ; there is only One
Can tell the Future, and those chosen ones
To whom He shows it when the times are full.

VII

“ O Man, thou see’st before thee what of old
Was deem’d a poet’s fable, fully shown
In its reality ; remember this ;
That what is here full-orb’d, and perfected,
Begins on earth ; that, whether it be hate
That steels the heart, and arms the murderer’s hand,
Or envy, or ambition, or the lust
Of the world’s lawless pleasures that begets
The robber’s lawless act, or tyranny,
And pride, that sacrifice unto themselves
The simple, and the poor, and lash them on
In serried hosts to slaughter one another,

In days of youth when love and hope are new,
And thus annul the purpose of earth-life,
Which should endure until its time is full,
And the experience which that life should give,
Kingly, or common crimes ; whatever deeds
Of darkness meet together in deep Hell
Are rooted in self-loves, and godless wills ;
Else were this world the very poet's dream
That mortals deem it : were they then but wise,
As they shall be hereafter, Hell were not.
Remember too, O King, men on the earth—
Where Good and Evil flow on side by side,
Or mix together like to wandering streams,
Or change, as shade and sunshine, as ye look
Across a champaign—see Futurity
For ever as the Present, or the end
Of all things with the mortal life itself.
But Life, being Life, can never die at all ;
And yet it cannot live without its Love,
For Life and Love are One ; and so it is
That, tho' the Love be evil, it must feed
The Life that never dies. And, mark, the love
Of Evil is a thirst unquenchable
By those who drink of Evil, till at length
All pure affections, born of Good and Truth,
Grow tasteless to the fever'd heart on fire,
As sweet fruits to the lion's tongue ; for Evil
Is never sated anymore than Good.
But Good is as the Sun that clothes with life,

And fills the waste while aught remains to fill ;
But Evil rolls on as the fiery flame
While aught remains before it to destroy.
Hatred is never cool'd, nor Envy charm'd,
Nor Pride abated, nor the Lust of power,
Or Greed of gain ; and so it is that they,
Who hide themselves from Good and Truth, beget
Evil and False within them, ev'n as weeds
Rankle in sunless caverns, or foul worms
Feed on the rotting corse : and after death
They waken to the joys they loved before,
With strength regather'd. Oh ! that Man on earth
Would see the smallest seed of Evil sown,
And not uprooted, as the poison-tree
That will o'ershadow all Futurity,
Which else were sunbright ; would look on the wrongs,
That he delights in, as that gate of Hell,
Which, shut on him, is nevermore unbarr'd ;
And the first slope beneath the mountain-top,
That lies in sunshine, toward which he moves
With dance, and song, and heedless step, as paths
That glide with quickening speed upon the edge
Of fearful precipices, and the gloom
Of endless darkness whence there is no way !'

VIII

" He ceased awhile ; but I was stricken dumb,
Till from my sorrow came low-voiced words.

'O Spirit, what shall save the death-bound man,
If this be true? Will He, who hath condemn'd
The evildoer to the prisonhouse
Of this dark world, not rather laugh to hear
The feeble cry, if He could hear so far;
As earthly kings—alas! that such should be—
Gloat o'er the tortured lives of them they hate,
Rather than slay?' He answer'd, 'Son of Man,
Ye are not judged, or sentenced, or enchain'd,
Save by your own selves, victims of selfwill.
The Evil is your own, the punishment
Evil itself, which strikes in its rebound
The heart that dealt it, and implants therein
Its barbed point; God, who is only Good,
Ministers unto Man but Good alone.
Man is made free to choose, or to refuse
The Good that is provided, as he is
To live in darkness rather than in day,
And shun the sunlight, or to blind his eyes.
And, if his choice be Good, it is free love
That blossoms into beauty more and more,
As the Spring roses in the Summer sun;
But if his choice be evil, 'tis free Hate
That spreads in burning as a forest fire;
Such freedom, shackled by resistless power
In forced obedience, would avenge itself
In anger and in hate, as prisoners bound
On earth by armed men, and stay'd from ill,
Will curse the righteous judge, and rend their chains,

And crown with bitter thoughts their wrongful deeds.
So Man delights in freedom, as a babe
Tries its first steps, remembering not the hand
That holds him up ; and yet his will, tho' free
To crown itself with Evil, is not free
To triumph, and discrown Almightiness,
For so freewill would be an Antigod.

Man works himself the torment that he fears
By lawless acts against the perfect Law.
Who thrusts his hand into the fire, and cries
Against his Maker, or against the fire
That is ordain'd for uses and delights,
Is but an angry child ; who cries that God
Hath damn'd to death one living soul He made,
And doom'd to penal torment without end
One Spirit for the evils wrought in Time,
Hath made of Him a Demon Infinite,
Compared with whom the blackest fiend below
Is a bright Angel ! And who holds that God
Avenges wrongs, as though Himself were wrong'd,
With lightnings that afflict but not consume,
Crowns the Allwise with folly like his own.

Ah ! rather think Almighty Love itself
Would weep eternally, if but one soul
Were irredeemable, and His right hand
Unable to uplift it from the deeps
Ev'n of abysmal darkness ! Son of Man,
I cannot tell thee more ; I tell thee now
More than I know ; yet, if the will be light

That leads to knowledge, what I feel, and yearn,
 And hope for, surely shall fulfil itself.
 Shall not the God of gods come forth at last
 Out of His temple, and reveal Himself
 To Man all-perfect in His Love and Truth ;
 Love, as a sevenfold glory on His face,
 Truth, oceanic music hymning Him
 Changelessly Good, omnipotently wise,
 Therefore for ever Just, for ever True,
 For ever without measure Merciful ?
 And, if both Will and Thought be Life from Him,
 From Him full surely all good thoughts are breathed.
 Therefore I know that all I feel, and yearn,
 And hope for, shall come forth as Power Divine !'

IX

" 'Spirit,' I cried, ' thy words are strange and new.
 What know we on the earth of Power, that holds
 Mercy, and not a sword, in his right hand ?
 I am a king ; and if there be a King
 Of kings, I cannot think of such a one,
 Save as unpitying Pride that spares no foe,
 And casts down to the dust all rebel wills
 As I might crush a scorpion underfoot.'
 I ceased ; there was long silence ; then again
 I spake in whispers low. ' Fain would I hear
 Such thoughts for ever, even were they dreams ;
 For they are as sweet music, long unheard,

Breathed suddenly into the charmed ear
Upon a gust of summer ; yet again
My heart is troubled, and my mind is dark.
Can Love like that, with power to work its will,
Look for a moment on the wrecks of Time,
The cry of wounded innocence ; the wrath
Of darkling hearts that never saw the light ;
And not stretch forth the hand that rules the world,
And snatch the suffering race, both good and ill,
From endless pain ?' I ceased, and bow'd my head,
Half blinded by perplexity and woe,
But for a moment, but that moment fill'd
With thoughts so fast it seem'd an age of Time,
Ev'n as a flash of lightning in the night
Unveils a hidden world. Again I spake
In whispers low ; 'Can it be possible,
Immortal one, can it be possible
That pain may be the steep and flinty road
That reascends unto the mountain-top,
To lave in light once more, and quaff the dawn ?
Is sorrow needful ? Are the woful heart,
And wasted frame, but as annealing fires
That cleanse away the dross, and leave the gold
Pure in the crucible of mortal clay ?
Is evil but the lifeless mask that hides
A better life ? the terror that conceals
Beauty, that shall be seen, when days of Time,
And ages of Eternity shall pass,
And be no more for ever ? Shall the soul

That sins, and dies, yet lives,—as I have seen
In this dread world—ev'n as the spirit-form,
That clothes thy soul, O thou Immortal one,
Thro' throes of Nature, through afflicting pains,
Through age and weakness, comes forth in the end
A nobler body ; shall the soul itself,
Stronger by striving with infernal foes,
Risen out of torment, and the fires of Hell,
After Æonian æons are roll'd by,
'Mid the celestial hosts stand forth at last,
The mightiest of the mighty ; ev'n as he,
—If I may show the greater by the less—
Who overcomes earth-trials, earns a crown
More honourable than the little child
Who parts on wings of innocence ?' Alas !
That thought, like to an Atlantean load,
Weigh'd me down utterly ; within it lay
Far less of hope, than terror and despair.
My cry went forth in anguish, 'Oh ! how long
Shall I, the miserable, self-condemn'd,
The doer of dread deeds nought can undo,
Destroyer of the lives I loved the best,
And can no more recall when I go back
To fill up my mortality, and drain
My cup of hopeless tears ; how long shall I
Linger in darkness ?' Then he answer'd me ;
And tears were trembling in his eyes the while,
And a sweet sorrow in his voice ; 'O King,
I speak from knowledge ; only till the pride

That hath rebell'd is broken ; till the eyes
That never wept at last dissolve in tears ;
The tongue, that shot forth curses, mourns ; the hands,
That shook defiance, clasp in prayer ; the brows,
That threaten'd Heaven, are level with the dust ;
And the heart loves that love which it receives,
For Man is Man because he can go forth
To meet his God, and from free heart and full
Give back the lovegift without measure given.
Sure as the Sun is seen thro' parting clouds,
Love, that is Life, fills up the yearning void
That seeks for Love when ills are cast away ;
I speak from knowledge ; once I was as thou !'
' Alas ! ' I cried, ' if some are ransom'd thus
From their own evils, what is the doom of them
Who stand as adamant, or peaks of ice
That never melt, against all better thoughts ? '
' Hast thou not mark'd on earth,' my guide replied,
' One who rebels against the laws divine
Of Nature, till the ruin'd tabernacle
Of his own body, builded of the dust,
Falls from him, haply destined to endure
An hundred years but for his mad misdeeds ?
And so the soul goes forth before its time,
And seeks the evil sphere to which his ills
Have drawn him. Even as his fleshly house
Was wreck'd on earth, his spiritual frame,
Knit of such subtle substances as yield
Obedience to the will, and better serve

Than swiftest wings to bear him to and fro ;
This nobler armour, fitted to advance
From strength to strength of the Immortal Life,
From beauty unto beauty, dies at length
The second death, because the darken'd soul
Within no longer could receive the light
From the One Life, that is the Sun of All
That is, and was, and will be, gods and men.
And so the spirit which can never die
Goes forth again, and whither ? Who can tell,
Save Him alone from whom all spirits flow ?'

X

" Again I sued him in low-voiced words.
' O spirit, suffer me again to plead
For answer to my troubled thoughts. I hear
Such utterance from thy lips as lifts my heart
Above itself, and shows a door of hope
Beyond the dungeon walls of my despair.
Can deeds like mine be ransom'd by good thoughts ?
Can blood be wash'd by penitential tears ?
Is not all wrong men do to one another
Follow'd on earth by vengeance ? Ev'n the poor,
Who have not knowledge, done to death at once
By angry justice—Shall a king go free
Hereafter, whom they cannot reach on earth ?
Oh ! will not rather the Great Gods who rule
Crown him with all their wrath ?' He answer'd me

In such sweet tones as might a mother's voice :
‘ Be comforted ; the Gods whom ye have dream'd
Are but your proper selves, enthroned and fill'd
With life immortal only to be lived
For pride, or vengeance ; fling away the fear
That hath bewilder'd ye, and wrought your souls
Into the semblance of the things ye fear.
For there is only One, and He is Love,
And Love is Life : ye cannot look on Him
In picture, or in carved work, or hear
His voice in outward tongues oracular.
But, whensoe'er an ill thought is disarm'd
By pity ; or a self-love is outweigh'd
In the just balance by a wiser will ;
Or when the freezing hand, that griped the gold,
Relaxing lets it fall into the lap
Of deathpale hunger ; when the envious tongue
Forbears to slander ; or the proud man's scorn
Yields a soft answer ; and the uplifted hand
Of hatred or of anger falls again ;
And eyes that lighten'd vengeance melt in tears ;
Then He speaks to ye, then ye hear His voice.
He only bids ye ask, that He may give
Out of His treasures that same very love
That is His Life and yours ; and were but men,
And kings of men, fit vessels to receive,
New passions would burn in the hearts of all ;
New visions would light up the sight of eyes ;
New knowledge would illumine the dark ways ;

And miracles would be no longer marvels ;
Sorrow, and pain on earth, and death no more,
And earth as heaven ; for that diviner Sun
Of Living Love would scatter off all Ill,
Ev'n as the orb of Nature rends the clouds,
And turns the icebound earth to paradise !

XI

“ ‘ O King, abide in patience, not despair.
We cannot know till the All-knowing wills,
And they, the nearest to his counsels, bid
The lesser ministers to make them known
Ev’n to the least, and they, when time is full
Breathe them into the souls of mortal men.’
He stood awhile with upward-gazing eyes,
And parted lips, as though he saw a light,
Or heard a voice ; and then he said, ‘ Ev’n now,
Methinks, I drink in hopes unfelt till now,
As though I heard a highest Angel say,
‘ Beloved, speak unto this son of man
A word of comfort ; let him not lament
The far-off of the Future, as though he
Were doom’d to linger on the woful earth
Throughout a night of countless ages, lit
By momentary lightnings, and the gleam
Of stars thro’ rifted thunderclouds, again
To be o’erwhelm’d with darkness, till the dawn
Comes slowly thro’ millenniums of despair.

The Infinite alone can lift the weight
Of the Eternal æons ; and the hopes
Of mortal man can never burn so bright
And far into the Future as to leave
The Present quench'd in darkness, as the eye
Blinded by daring to look on the sun.
Man looks but for a moment on the life
Of Man, and, parted thence, may minister
To Good or Ill ; blessed is he to whom
The first is given, for he shall weep no more
Who wipes from weeping eyes the tears away !'
Again I hear a highest Angel say ;
' The Allwise, who looks on Evil, in the end
Must vanquish, or be vanquish'd ; shall the cry
That we have heard, that challeng'd Heaven, be heard,
And have no answer from the Highest Throne ?
O spirit, this we tell thee, Life is God !
O spirit, tell this mortal, Life is God !
And every life in every living thing,
And lowest life in lowest Hell, is His !
And shall He doom one living soul to death
Eternal, and to everlasting pain,
And not withhold the fatal life foreknown,
Rather than breathe it ? Spirit, name it not !
No ! as the stars come forth upon the earth,
When tempest-clouds, that hid them, rend asunder,
God at the last shall bring forth every life,
As on the earth, so in the lowest Hell,
Thro' swathing folds of sorrow, sin, and pain,

That shall fall off—as doth the mortal dust
Of Man on earth leaving his spirit free—
Pure as at first, and Good shall conquer Ill ;
And Evil into eternal ruin cast,
Like thunders before sunlight, pass away
Before His face for ever and for ever !'

XII

"Once more we trod the way by which we came.
And now 'twas upward, till we reached the gate
Of knotted adamant ; but it was barr'd
As at the first. I turn'd back once to look ;
And, thro' grey twilight, were made visible
Over the undulating vastness strown,
As 'twere far off, the blacken'd ruins huge
Of smouldering cities, and their smoke arose
Unto the farthest distance ; here and there
A glow of fires that made the dreariness sound
More desolate. I saw a moment's light
Flash down from heaven upon it, and the waste,
From dimness, changed to blackness palpable,
Impenetrable ; and I stretch'd my arms
Before me ; darkness was upon me again
As heretofore, when, after that great cry,
I sank down in oblivion on the earth.
Only I saw the God who led me on
Pass swiftly from me, and his glory wane
Fast as a beam before a shadow flies,

Or moonlight from the dark before the dawn.
I cried more lamentably than at first,
'Forsake me not!' A sweet voice from afar
Came unto me, or seem'd to speak within
In answer; 'King of men, be merciful
Who hast found mercy; part, and be at peace.'
And then I woke, and see ye by me here."

THE END

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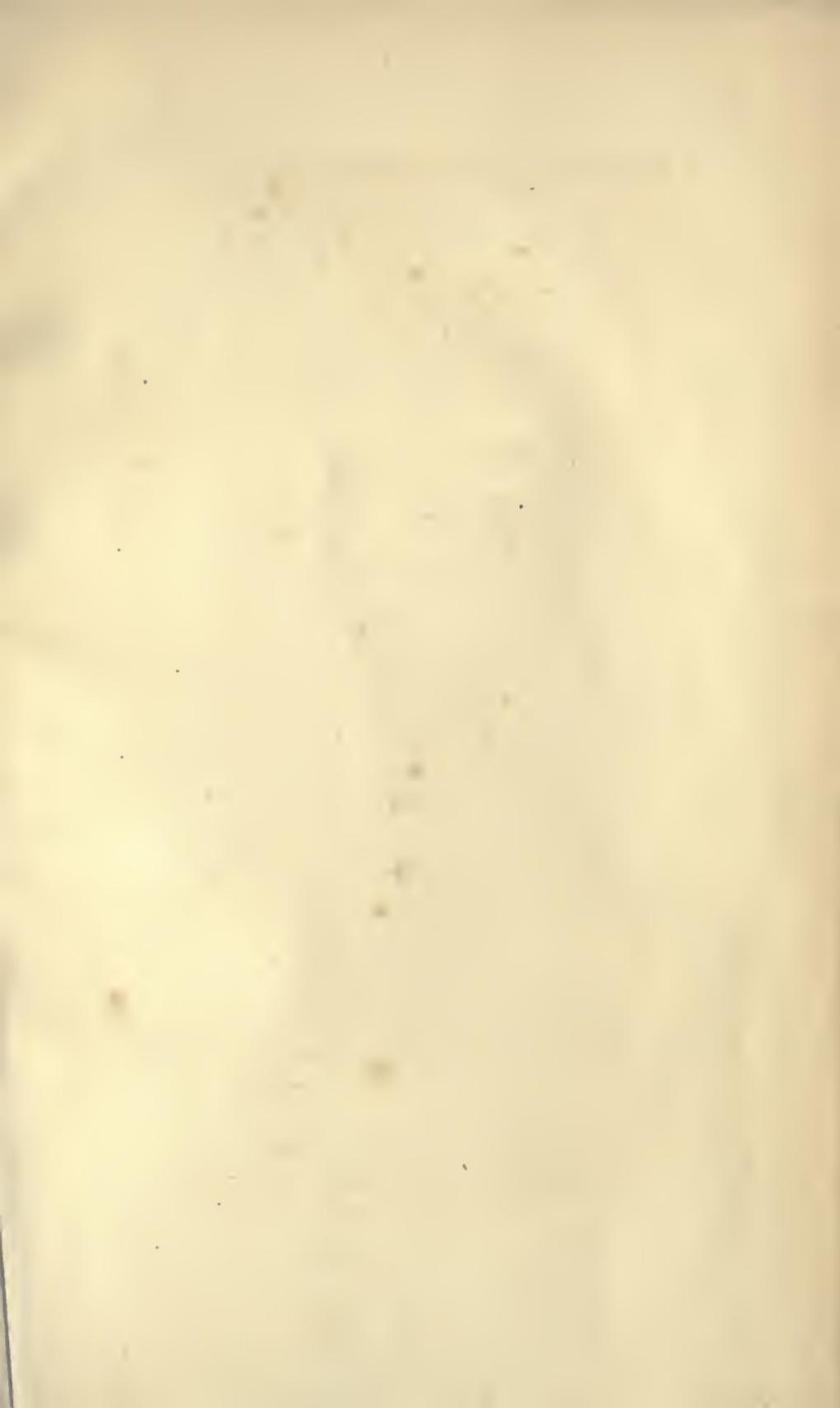
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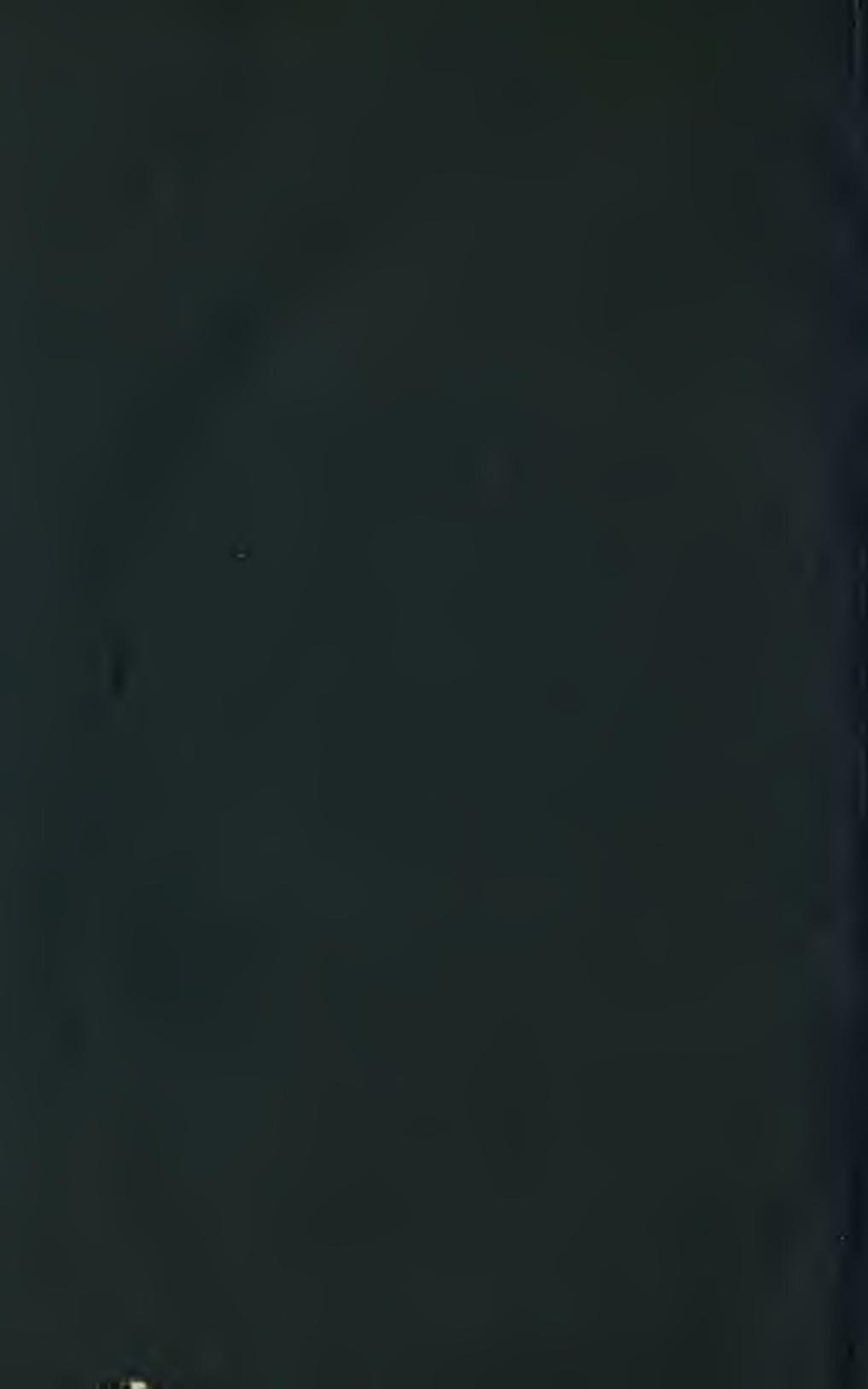
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